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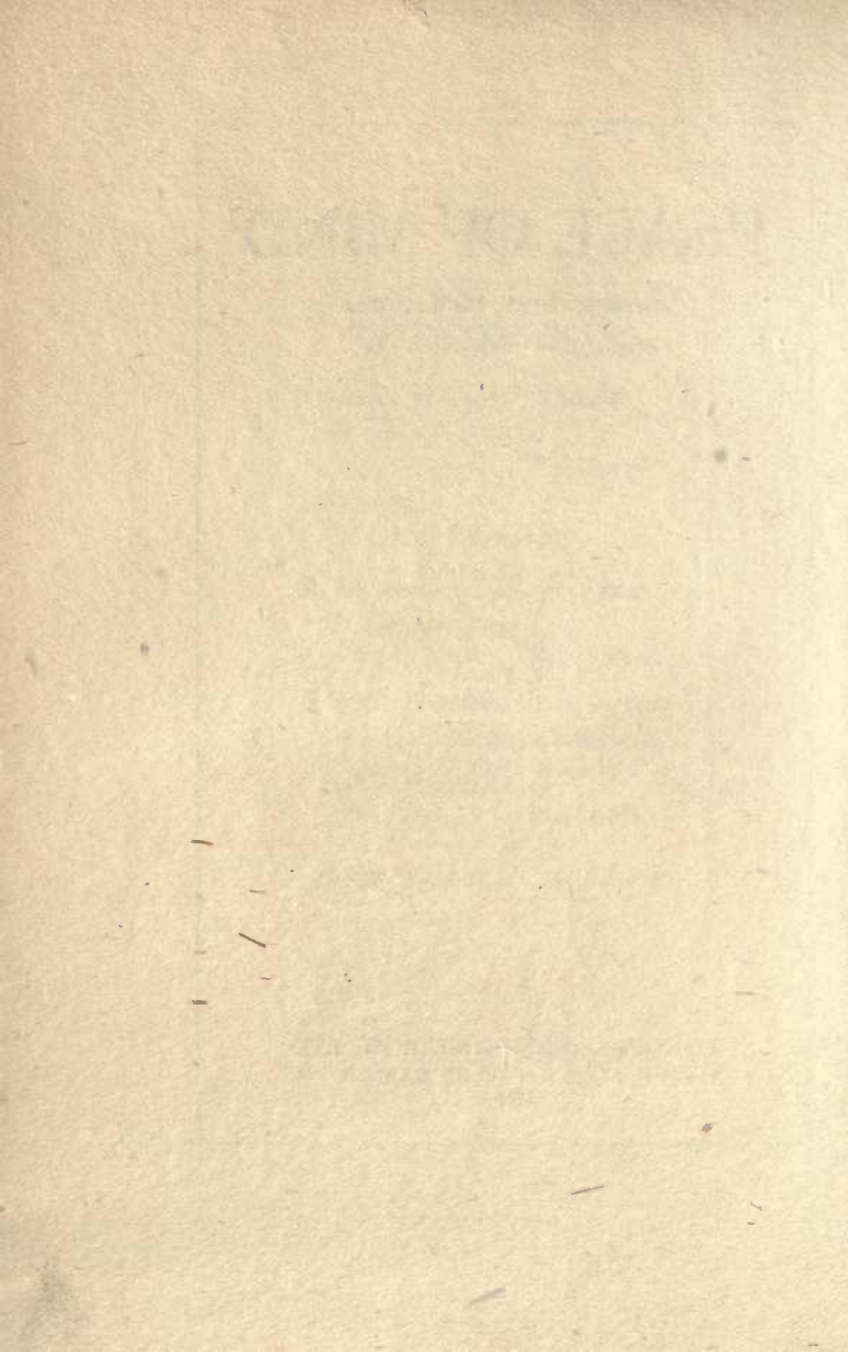
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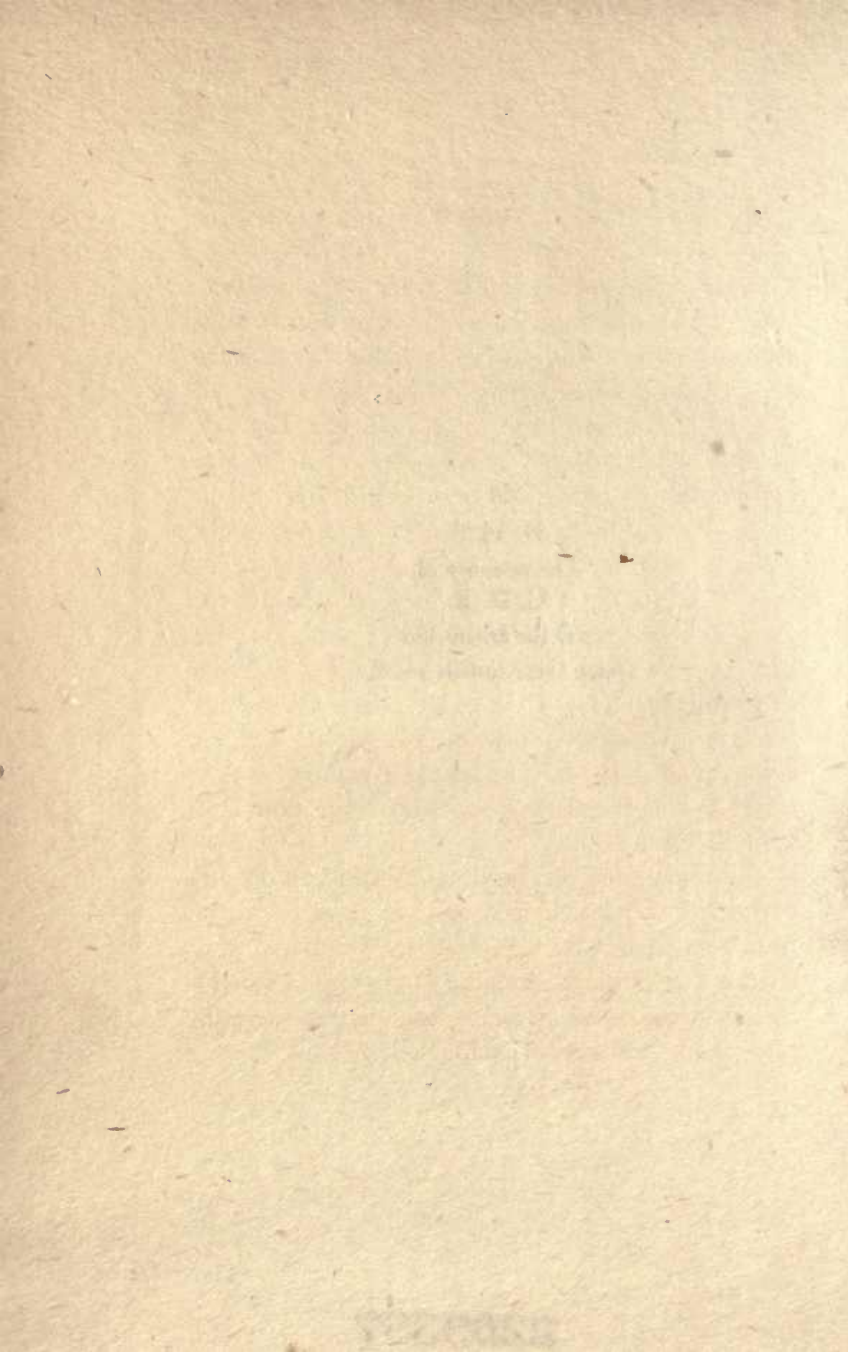
Essays and Reflections

August 1914—September 1917

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1918



To
H. H. S.
The memory of
G. D. B.
and the friendship
which these initials recall.

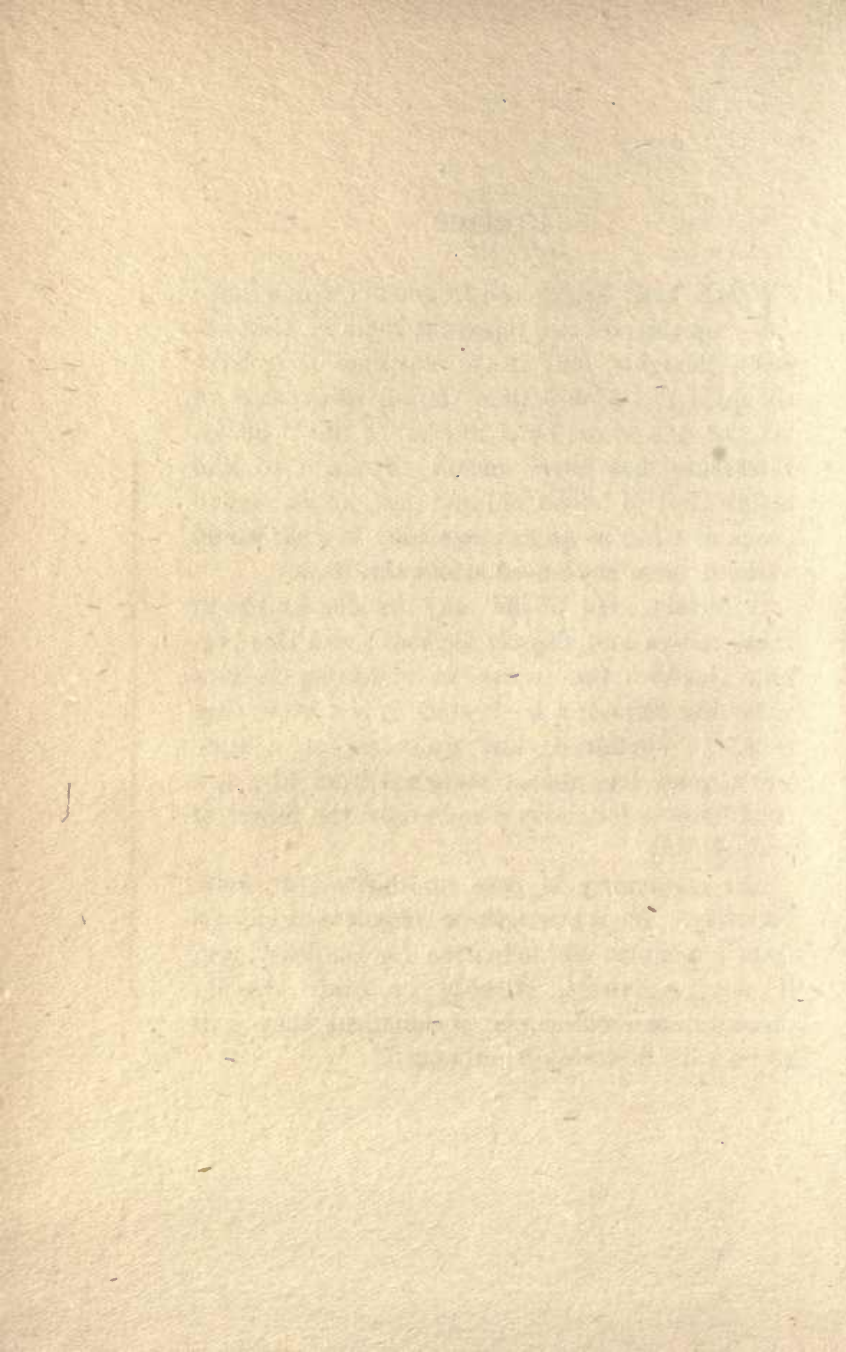


Preface

THE brief essays and fragments which make up this volume represent some of the subjects, thoughts, and stray reflections that have occupied the leisure time, during three years of war, of one whose chief interest in life is books. Literature has never meant so much to him before, and to books, old and new, he owes such peace of mind as he has possessed in what would without them have been intolerable days.

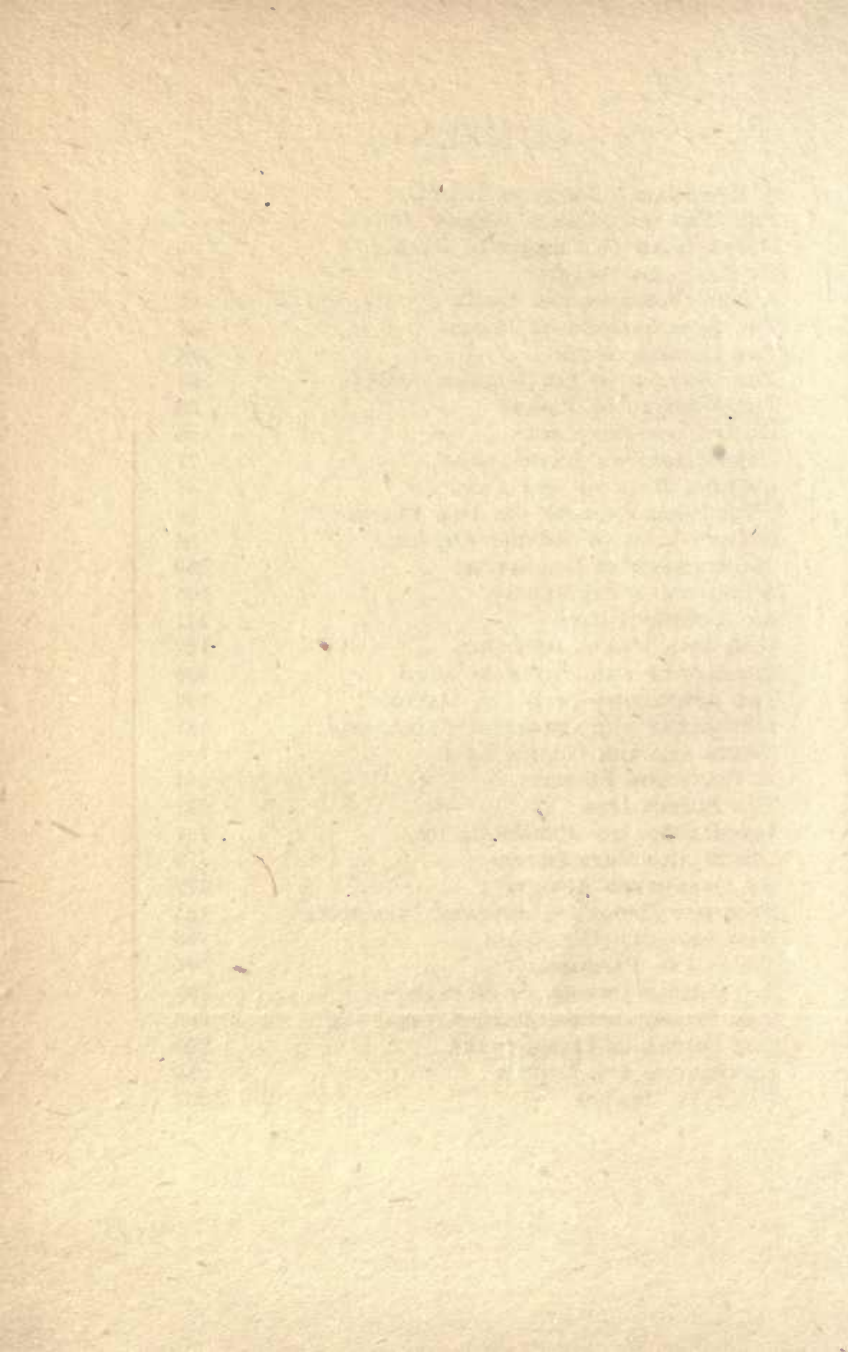
A certain view of life may be discernible in these essays and *disjecta membra*; and this perhaps justifies the writer in venturing to give them the form of a book, since it is a view that tends to confidence and quietness at a time when quiet has almost vanished from life, and confidence is for many people only the flower of a single day.

The anonymity is here no device to excite curiosity. Be it strength or weakness, it springs from a genuine disinclination for publicity, and if any reviewers, friendly or other, should discover his identity, he is confident they will respect his desire to be unnamed.



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ERRATA

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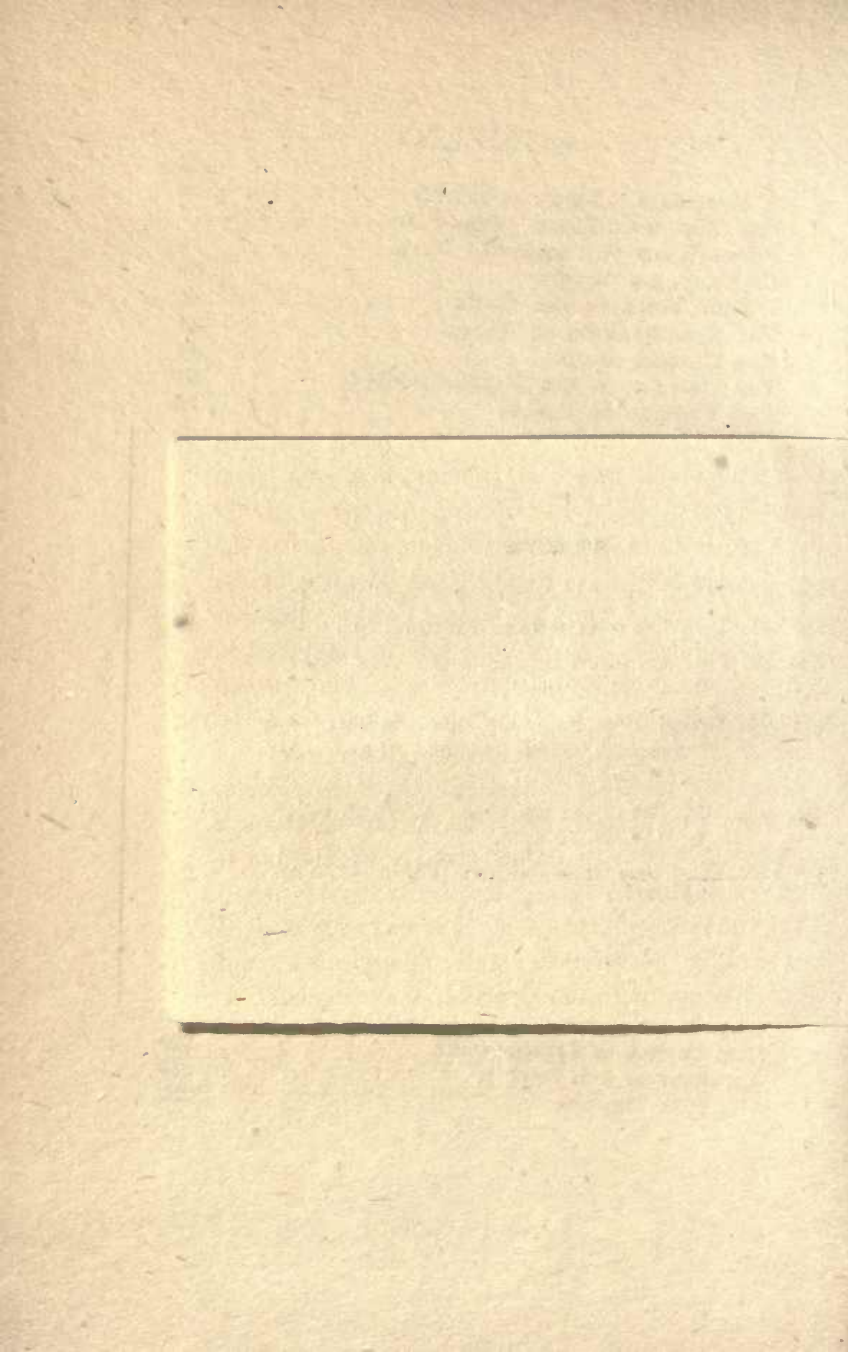
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Page 46. Fifth line from bottom, *read* "Blue Paper "
for "White Paper."

Page 126. Second line from top, *read* moenia for
"mcenia." Same line, *add* "least" after
"at."

Page 145. Fifth line from top, *read* "W. D. Howells"
for "W. H. Howells."

Page 218. Third line from bottom, *add* "of" after
"kind."



I

AUGUST 5th, 1914

THE declaration of war has made books a subject of the least importance, and even the reading of them a kind of delusion. Only one subject is in the minds of everybody : What will be the position of the British people a month hence, in three months hence, when the war is over ? Just now no one wants to read books. The demand is for newspapers, and, when they have been read, average people want to discuss the topics with their friends, or at night they are drawn irresistibly to the streets. In London, at least, the streets at night have a fascination which far exceeds anything books can supply.

I thought of this last Monday night as I wandered, an aimless unit, backwards and forwards among the crowds that moved incessantly between Charing Cross and Buckingham Palace by way of The Mall. I had come up from the country about six o'clock, and was

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surprised to find the City and all the way to the Strand, almost deserted, and a kind of Sabbath calm reigning.

As I got further west, past Wellington Street, things were livelier, and at Charing Cross and Trafalgar Square the scene was of life and silent expectancy. Hundreds of people thronged about the great Square, for the most part in silence; looking expectantly towards The Mall, and, more interestedly, towards Parliament Street and Whitehall. Every minute the waiting crowds grew larger, the stream of taxis increased in volume and by seven o'clock Trafalgar Square and right up to Downing Street was densely filled with people standing, expectant but silent. No one knew what had happened, what might happen, but everybody knew that things, momentous things for us and for the world, were happening, and must soon be made known. So, with the irresistible human desire to be near the actual scene in the moment of crisis, they stood waiting and gazing towards the seat of World Empire, Whitehall, and along the Mall to the Palace, where the crowned head of that Empire resides.

At seven I went away for an hour to a quiet restaurant, where I had my evening meal, and at eight set out, to find my way to my rooms and my

A MEMORABLE NIGHT IN LONDON

work—or to rejoin the crowd and spend the evening in the streets. Undecided wandering brought me to Charing Cross Road, where I stood irresolute, staring at the back of the National Gallery, and realizing that if I turned the corner there would be no question to decide. Suddenly cheers, the echoes of the “Marseillaise,” and the tramping of feet. Two minutes later a band of some hundreds of French folk, young men and girls, with a sprinkling of middle-aged, swung past shouting the “Marseillaise” and waving the Tricolor, alternating with “God save the King” and the Union Jack. I watched them pass down St. Martin’s Place to the junction of the Strand with Trafalgar Square, heard a roar as they met the waiting crowds, and with no uncertainty now, turned my back definitely on my rooms. I was out for whatever the night had in store; for I, too, had the feeling vaguely realized and yet quite convincing, that anything extraordinary might happen. Nothing did happen of any consequence, but I saw all there was to see, and thought a great deal about crowds, and crises, and nationalities, and ideals, and war and its results.

Meantime the late editions of the evening papers were out, and in a few minutes the thousands of waiting people knew that Great Britain had

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definitely, if without any passion, declared her intention of standing by France. Sir Edward Grey's speech was too cold and calculating to rouse enthusiasm, and the crowd took it in silence. No doubt it had a sobering effect. There must have been many in that silent multitude who forecasted the next six months with anxiety, and a small number who viewed even the next three months with terror at their hearts.

At this moment it is clear, in London at least, that we are in for sacrifice and very real suffering, and there are many who see the spectre of actual starvation before them. Upon men like myself the trouble and loss which will result from war may fall very heavily. And on Monday night I had not an ounce of optimism. But gradually I found the conviction forming in my mind, that whatever happened to individuals, I should always be glad that my country had at this critical moment taken the path which honour, in the highest sense, demands. And with the thought came a kind of uplift, which if it did not make me share the enthusiasm that began to break out in recurring bursts of cheering, made me sympathetic, and at least tolerant of it.

There is another view I know—the view of those who hold that all war is sinful; and of those

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who say that because we had no alliance with France we ought to have drawn away from her, by a declaration of neutrality. To me, such an argument is exactly as if a man morally pledged to meet a certain obligation, were at the crucial moment to repudiate it because he had not signed any document. An "alliance" is a signed document between nations; the "entente" is a moral obligation. And "his word is his bond" is a phrase that we, not without some justice, have preempted for special application to British people. The "entente" may have been a blunder, but both political parties have accepted it, and the nation has not protested. To repudiate it now when it is the standby of France, who is in a life or death position, would be to brand us with a mark of shame that would never be effaced. We might save our skin, but we should lose our soul. And when a nation loses its soul its end is not far off.

So my mind worked, while my feet took me to The Mall. Crowds were pouring back from the Palace—the crowds, I suppose, who had been standing there in the afternoon—and passing out by the great arches to merge in the denser crowd in Trafalgar Square. Suddenly, the "Marseillaise" again; hurrahing, and a large body of French

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shopkeeping young men and women, with a strong English contingent appeared, waving flags, tricolor and Union Jack, making for the Palace. Crowds followed them, and I in their wake. Why we went to the Palace no one of us, I am sure, could have told. The great gates were, of course, closed, but from an upper window two ladies looked down on the cheering, singing multitude. By and by King George and Queen Mary appeared on the balcony and bowed, to the accompaniment of tremendous cheering. Again and again the Royal pair bowed, obviously pleased—the electric arc lights showing them clearly; and again and again the cheers were renewed and “God Save the King” sung with wearisome iteration. Then the King and Queen withdrew, and the crowd surged back into the Mall, singing, and shouting, and booing opposite the German Ambassador’s residence in Carlton Terrace. No doubt other bands went to the Palace and repeated the same experience. I passed across Trafalgar Square without any desire to linger, and found my way to my solitary rooms, conscious that that night the nation had made a decision that affected the world, and that I had formed a conviction, the strength of which I should need to sustain me in the next few months.

II

WE are now in the fifth week of the war, and it is beginning to strike even the most optimistic, that its determination is to be an affair of many months instead of the "three weeks job" that so many predicted it would be in the first days. Just three weeks ago the manager of one of the largest exporters in London asked my opinion as to how long the war would last. Cautiously I said I hoped its issue would be decided in three months by the destruction of the German Navy, and that I should be happy if the war were concluded in a year. My business friend shrieked in derision : " Three months ! Three weeks more likely. That is what they are saying in the City ! Oh, *they* know." I said no more, but reflected that the intelligence of men in " The City," on matters other than of making money, has never been very high.

No one who knows anything of the character of the German people, the amazing mental pabulum

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that their War Lords and " professors " have fed them on for years, their prodigious army, and the resources of Germany, could have any belief in a speedy termination to the war. Add to these the fact that the German authorities know that for her it is a struggle for world supremacy or Imperial downfall, and it is evident that Germany will not say " enough " until half of her army is destroyed, and famine stares her in the face. Like ourselves, Germany has at various times in her history carried on war for years, and emerged victorious. The conditions of warfare to-day are widely different from those of the Seven Years' War; but the stakes are infinitely greater, and the national equipment and resources are greater in proportion. Let no one make a mistake about this—we are in for a long, bloody and costly struggle.

I was no optimist on the fateful August 5 when we declared war. To-day, after five weeks' fighting of the Allied armies with no decisive result, save an apparently purposeless retreat all the time, pessimism is not in my mind or heart. To read of the horrors of war makes me sick; descriptions of the murderous work of shells and bombs and floating mines repel me. Yet there is not the beginning of a desire in my mind to see

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the war finished until the fetish of force as the ruling factor in civilization has been utterly destroyed. That is worth all the horrors of the war. That is what those of us will see who live to the end. That is what those to whom the war means loss of parent, husband, sons, material means, will have as their great compensation. With all my heart I say it is enough.

Already the talk of "spiritual" motives and issues is being heard. Mr. Asquith used the word in its loftiest sense in his Guildhall speech, used it with amazing impressiveness, and defended the word with convincing eloquence. That speech offers happy augury that Great Britain will come out of the struggle with clean hands. Of the speech itself one may say that, for the noble emotion which gave it the swell inseparable from the highest eloquence, the fine dignified English in which it was expressed, the Guildhall speech will survive as a piece of literature unequalled in our history. It was a speech to make every Briton thrill with pride. If it is read by the Kaiser he will know in his heart that his boasting is vain, and that the nightmare of his "mailed fist" is already passing away from Europe.

That is my firm belief, and it is based upon something deeper than the early victories of Liège,

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or the thrilling stories of the gallantry of our soldiers in the face of overwhelming odds. As eagerly as any man I scan the news every morning. If the news is good my spirits go up ; if, on the other hand, it is bad, my confidence is not shaken. There can only be one end—the utter defeat of Germany, whose civilization is the denial of the moral order of the universe. Germans boast of their “kultur,” but it is civilization as we may conceive it to have been in the Age when man was struggling to articulate.

Many friends of mine have wondered how the Germans can be such a “cultured” people and yet have this barbarous worship of brute force. After careful study for many years, it has for long been my conviction that German culture is entirely a superficial thing. It has been learned, acquired, and worn on the surface. It has never transpierced and transformed the whole nature. Until this happens, culture has no real refining influence, and in a supreme moment it will be shaken off as an encumbrance.

That is the explanation of the barbarities—exaggerated no doubt, but undeniable—and vandalism which the war has witnessed. It is the only explanation of the destruction of noble edifices, cathedrals, priceless works of art in

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Louvain and other cities. Culture, the real thing, is spiritual, and no truly cultured nation could destroy those priceless expressions of the spiritual aspirations of bygone generations. If Germany as a united empire was on the way to realize true culture, she was rudely set back when the Kaiser, in a now notorious speech to the troops setting out for China fifteen years ago, counselled them to behave themselves not as Christian knights, but as "the Huns under Attila." The German nation made no protest against that extraordinary exhortation, and to-day two millions of soldiers are out to give it practical expression against the Christian civilization of the rest of Europe.

I had written so far when I came across a striking quotation from Ruskin given in *The Daily Chronicle*. It is from "Fors," Letter 40, and is dated 1870 :

"Blessing is only for the meek and merciful, and a German cannot be either ; he does not understand the meaning of the words. . . . No quantity of learning can ever make a German modest. Accordingly, when the Germans get command of Lombardy they bombard Venice, steal her pictures which they can't understand a single touch of, and entirely ruin the country morally and physically, leaving behind them

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misery, vice and intense hatred of themselves wherever their accursed feet have trodden. They do precisely the same thing by France—crush her, rob her, leave her in misery of rage and shame, and return home, smacking their lips and singing *Te Deum*.”

A few weeks ago I said to a friend that John Ruskin was a “forgotten philosopher.” He is, more’s the pity, for he had a truer idea of moral values than any teacher of the last hundred years. I have made this striking extract from a letter written in 1870, that fatal year in the history of France, as a very suitable epilogue to these reflections on the war and German civilization and culture after forty-three years of growth in insolent might.

III

THE publishers and various literary lights, are still trying in the pages of daily newspapers to induce people to buy books for Christmas presents. I hope they may be successful, for to me no present is so acceptable as a book on Christmas morning, if it happens to be one that has not before come my way. Long ago I had a friend who for years gave me a book on Christmas Day. Sometimes it was a book costing five shillings, or seven and sixpence ; sometimes it was only a shilling reprint. But always it was welcome, because always it was a book that I had not read before, carefully selected by a man who knew my tastes and had some acquaintance with the books on my shelves. The memory of that Christmas packet, and the pleasurable anticipations it aroused, is grateful to look back on.

My habit is to read every Christmas Day after

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I have come back from church, and any new book within my reach is sure to have its innings then. But this, although a supreme pleasure for me, is not a common habit, I find. Many people who live in an atmosphere of books, look upon Christmas as a necessary day off, which should be devoted to other pleasures than literature. In fact, the friend to whom I have already referred, once expressed amazement because he found me discussing a book on the immortality of the soul, and the literary beauty of the Athanasian Creed on Christmas Day. No doubt my friend was right, and I should have been a more acceptable father to my children if I had been running about the garden with them and making Christmas jollity. But each to his taste, and according to his ability. I am no great hand at games, but I can look on with great enjoyment at others playing, even if I have a book in my hand. The truth is that to some people, even those engaged more or less among books every day, literature is the supreme enjoyment. So I may and do play games as a duty on Christmas Day, but when I want to please myself I take up a book.

Looking back over a number of years, I have remembered not a few of the new books that I read on Christmas Days; and it interests me to

BOOKS READ ON CHRISTMAS DAYS

find that, varied as those books have been, my favourite reading on Christmas Day has always been books in which the personality of the author was much in evidence. For this reason, books of essays or sketches are my standby, when no new book offers. The first volume I remember definitely as reading on a Christmas Day was *A Humble Romance*, by Mary Wilkins, in the pretty little shilling series published by Mr. David Douglas, of Edinburgh. I have probably never read the book again, although no doubt it is still on my shelves, but the memory of that day's reading of those wonderful New England Sketches is quite fresh still. In fact, nothing about New England has made such an impression, excepting *The Scarlet Letter*. As I write, I think if no new book turns up on Christmas Day I must renew my acquaintance with that volume of exquisite literary vignettes.

Not a few books have formed my Christmas reading, which I had known of for many years but had never come across in the ordinary way.—In parenthesis, let me say that surely the real way to enjoy a book is not to run after it, but to let it find you. This has been my own method, and although it has kept me for years from knowing certain books, the friendship became much closer

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than if I had pushed for an introduction in the early days of their existence, when everybody was clamouring about them.—Oddly, I had never read Trevelyan's *Life of Macaulay* until a friend sent me a copy about ten years ago. It has never become a familiar, chiefly because of my want of interest in the subject ; but it is a human book ; it made a deep impression on my mind, and when I read it again it shall certainly be on a Christmas Day. Macaulay was hardly a Christmassy person in the Dickens sense, and yet his life is for me a very suitable book for Christmas Days.

My first acquaintance with Henry James' essays was Christmas ten years ago in his *Partial Portraits*. No doubt the essay I read first, and perhaps enjoyed most, was the one on Stevenson ; but I found every one delightful, and to this day *Partial Portraits* is one of the most fascinating books of essays I have in my small collection. In the Stevenson sketch Mr. James says R. L. S., despite his confidences, was never among the "undraped" ; he would never, "if I may be allowed the phrase, stand for the nude," and the same might be said with more emphasis of James himself. There are no confessions, even of the Stevenson kind, in his essays ; and yet they have the charm of the true essay in which the per-

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sonality of the author is the chief thing. One likes the grave, but not solemn, restraint of Henry James; and one knows why one likes it, when one finds him, among literary men, and hardly second even to the late Andrew Lang, Stevenson's enthusiastic admirer.

One has had disappointments in Christmas Day reading, of course. Among them may be reckoned dreary days in which I tried to read certain classics which are "in every gentleman's library," but which, all my life, I have been unable to read. Strange it is, how reluctant one is to give up trying to do things for which we have neither taste nor aptitude; and how false is the view that all unpleasant tasks accomplished, have a moral or even intellectual value. It is one of the advantages that the last five years have brought, that I have given up certain unaccomplished ambitions quite definitely. Among these are certain great books which I have never read; for example—no, better not to name them, since they may be favourites of some of my readers, whose good opinion I want to keep; not to speak of the respect of a small girl whom I found immersed in one of those classics a few weeks ago.

Among Christmas Days, the happiest of twenty years was that in which I read Professor Butcher's

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Harvard Studies in Greek Subjects. All the day one lived in beauty—beautiful ideals, beautiful conversations, beautiful buildings—in every aspect of life, the spiritual being the thing that mattered, and the material subordinate, and only valued as the means to a higher end. That was a first impression of that most delightful of books, and to this day I count it the most beautiful book in my small library. Years later I lent it to a friend, a well-known theologian. He was then a man well over seventy, but it inflamed him to enthusiasm. He said it had taught him things he had never known before ; that if he had had such a book in his early life it might have changed his whole career. Which I could well believe, since to the receptive mind it opens new heavens and a new earth.

One does not always make new discoveries on Christmas Day, and yet one must always have a special kind of reading. So, fortunately, there are old favourites on which I fall back. Chief of them, I think, is the *Reminiscences* of Carlyle—one essay, that on his father, written almost immediately after the old man had died, while Carlyle was still in young middle life, and before he had reached his great fame, and was still in bonds—sympathetic—to his old faith. It is the

BOOKS READ ON CHRISTMAS DAYS

noblest sketch in all the literature with which I have acquaintance. Swelling with emotion, restrained by the thought of the mystery of life and the eternity into which his father had entered, the prose expression of the son's feelings attains the dignity and heartbreaking impressiveness of the Burial Service of the Prayer-Book. There is probably never a year in which I do not read that essay once, and it is generally on a Christmas Day.

How few books one has been able to name out of the many that one keeps for use always on particular occasions! But perhaps I have mentioned enough. No, one must bring in *Marius the Epicurean*, Charles Lamb's Letters, and Mrs. Oliphant's fragment of autobiography—a poignant thing—and Mark Rutherford, and John Woolman, and Boswell. There are parts of Boswell that I always turn to on Christmas Day if I take him up; and one knows where to turn in the other books I have named, so that there is no time wasted. I began by saying my Christmas Day favourites had all a distinctive quality. I think, perhaps, my favourite books for that day are graded according to their humanness.

IV

THE other week an Editor sent a letter to me from a correspondent who protested against "your esteemed contributor" (me—no less) being allowed to write pro-war articles and "sneers" at the "Christian peace-on-earth view." The article he referred to—one on Bernhardt's book—was so far from being a pro-war article that it was meant to show how utterly twisted the mind can become when it sets itself to make out a case for a special end. And I said the book should be carefully read by those who hold the Christian "peace-on-earth view," because Bernhardt actually devoted the best part of one chapter to proving that the Bible glorifies war. The incident, of no moment in itself, tempts me to say something about a very common habit—careless reading—which in this case led to the imputing of a motive which did not exist.

One knows the type of person. You meet

ON CARELESS READING

him or her at dinner, and as the talk must, in deference to you, be "literary," he or she says : "I wonder if you read a most unusual novel which I read a week or two ago. I can't remember its title, but it was most striking. Now—isn't it provoking ?—it's gone clean out of my mind." Willing to keep the conversational ball rolling, you suggest that the name of the author, or even of the publisher, might give you a clue, if the book was really a distinctive one. But no, the person "fond of reading" could remember neither ; even the plot, or the subject of the story, could not be recalled. No doubt the novel had been read ; no doubt the reader had thought it "unusual" ; but it had left nothing but a blurred impression on the mind, as of an unfixed photograph that has been exposed to the light. In a little while there would be no impression at all, but only a kind of smudge on which no new real impression could be made.

It is hard to say whether this is a vice, or a defect of memory. Undoubtedly there are some minds that have a greater "fixing" quality than others, for the printed matter. My memory recalls a cultivated working man, and close friend of my youth, who had simply no memory for the books he had read. In his case it had no

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bad results, for it made him a constant reader of the very fine small library that he had patiently collected over many years. His defective memory enabled him to read his favourites again and again, and yet to find beauties that he thought he had never discovered before. Neither was it much of a drawback in conversation, for he knew his authors' names, the names of their books, as one knows intimate friends and their particular views; and although he could not quote, he could always pull out a volume from its shelf and read the passage which he had forgotten. My friend was truly cultivated, in spite of a defective memory, because reading was his passion, and an author and his book were objects of reverence.

The people who forget the titles of books, and their authors—of course they never knew the names of their publishers—are, roughly speaking, people who could very well live without books, upon whom, indeed, books are probably incapable of making any educational impression. To me, people of this class would be much more interesting if they never mentioned books, or if they spoke of them only to say that they never read them.

I remember to this day how refreshing it was,

ON CARELESS READING

some years ago, to overhear in a restaurant a "City man" say frankly to another, "You know, I can't read books." I have no doubt he was an intelligent enough man, although he never read books. Given a certain order of mind, I can believe that he might even arrive at the mental cultivation that constant study of books inevitably gives, simply by studying the people whom he met every day. It is a commonplace that is always being forgotten, that life is literature—literature before art has thrown the glamour of imagination and of form about it; and if a choice must be made it is surely better to be ignorant of books than of the men among whom we live.

But even if the man who said "I can't read books" had a commonplace mind, he had evidently some character when he could dare to make such a frank confession in a public place. He had no pretensions which made him a hypocrite to himself and a vexation to the book-lover; and the chances are that his mind was in a healthier condition, and would be more open, to literature if and when his time came, than the person of spurious intellectual tastes who reads books because it is the thing to do, or to while away an idle hour.

I believe, however, that in the majority of

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cases the forgetting of books—their subject, titles, and authors—is simply due to a bad training of minds that have no natural interest in ideas or words. There are, for example, people who are so destitute of the faculty of reverence, that if they were introduced to a celebrated person they would feel no sense of honour, and not the slightest tendency to show more respect than they were accustomed to show to their ordinary acquaintances. One can readily believe that such people would read a book as carelessly as a newspaper, and treat it as lightly. I cannot conceive of a true love of literature without a certain instinctive reverence ; in fact, I think there cannot be. On the other hand, I am sure it can generally be taught and cultivated where it is not instinctive.

So at last I come to what I really want to say : that to read carelessly is worse than not to read at all ; that to read with intelligence, you must fix your mind upon the title of the book, which probably means something ; that, if the book is worth anything, it is “ bad form ” to neglect the author’s name, and in this way is worse than wicked ; and that, in the best cases, even the publisher’s name should be carefully studied.

V

I SPENT Sunday evening last reading *Wayside Wisdom*, by E. M. Martin, a book of essays published some years ago, which I noted at the time, but have since overlooked to my loss. If I were to say it is the most charming book of essays that has come my way for years, it would not be very strong praise, for books of essays with charm are so few that the notable ones are probably under a score. But when I say that *Wayside Wisdom* puts me in mind of *Dreamthorp*, and suffers nothing by comparison with Alexander Smith's classic, the unusual quality of the book will be appreciated. It is like Alexander Smith's—a book that has been “written in the country”; and the subjects, diverse as they are, have the unity that comes when all things are seen from a particular standpoint. It is a book in which a definite and mellow philosophy runs, and has the cast of thought which marks

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the man who looks more upon nature than upon human beings. You get the idea of a lonely man—or unusually gifted woman?—thinking aloud on many subjects, and gradually revealing a very attractive personality.

There are seventeen essays in the volume, and to name a few of the titles is to suggest something of the charm of the writer's style, as well as his point of view. Take a few at random. "Old Houses and Odd Dreams," "On Living in the Country," "The Smoke of Cities," "The Laying Waste of Pleasant Places," "On Living Alone," "On Growing Old," "On Being in Love," "Death and Transfiguration"—these are the essays that give me most pleasure; and I know that, time being given, I shall read them again many times. The one that has stirred most thought is entitled "The Advantages of Poverty," which has the rare distinction of carrying to the reader the conviction of sincerity. Perhaps the author had ambitions at one time, and dreamed of success and such riches as literature occasionally brings. No matter; his plea for poverty may be none the less sincere that the lot of a poor man is his by fate rather than by choice. The point is that, living the life of a poor man, without rebellion, he has got into the serene atmo-

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sphere where men and things can be seen as they are, and values sorted out.

The author tells a charming story of childhood, which I summarize, to its detriment. A country workman came to the boy's home to open a drawer, of which the key had been lost, and the child watching him, was fascinated by the huge bunch of keys he had brought with him—"as big as those that unlock an ogre's castle, to some small enough to fit a watch." The child whispered to the man that he had only one key—the key of a box in which all his small treasures were kept. "Then you are the luckiest person in all the world," the man said, speaking solemnly, but with a sly twinkle in his eye, "and you will always be lucky as long as you have only one. For the more keys you have the more troubles you will have, and you may take my word for it." That is the philosophy of poverty, and the standpoint from which the author of *Wayside Wisdom* makes many pleasant divagations in this most delightful piece of literature.

There comes back again to me from boyhood the recollection of a favourite book, *Un Philosophe Sous les Toits*, by Emile Souvestre, which, up till I was twenty, I thought one of the most charming of books. My copy has long been lost,

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but I remember its opening chapter, in which the "garret philosopher" gives his point of view, and about which I intend to write again. Mr. Martin's essay and the recollection of that very simple French book have set me wondering whether a taste for poverty may not be a real thing more often than we think, and if there are not many people living in poverty—I do not mean hungry poverty—who honestly would not change places with rich men. Recollecting cases known to myself, I incline to think that a "taste for poverty" is not so uncommon as to make one question the sincerity of one man who professes it.

13
—
Last week I spent an evening with one of the most famous poets of our day, in his lodgings—two very dingy, shabbily-furnished rooms in a far from fashionable part of London. He has got as much literary fame as he can hope for, and, with an income of about ~~12~~ a week fairly secure, he expresses himself as well content with his lot. Only, his longing is to get away to a little cottage in the country.

That got me, as the phrase goes. A poor man's life in the country is free from the sordidness that is generally inseparable from life below a certain level in a great city. Within sight of

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my own home in the country, there is a cottage, very tiny and very quaint, with a pretty garden in which it stands. The rent is not more than two shillings a week, and it is occupied by two middle-aged women—sisters, I judge, and, by the look of them, retired “schoolmarms” or governesses. I never pass the place without envying their lot. A pretty cottage for a rent of two shillings weekly, fruit and vegetables sufficient to serve the small household all the year, and good health—what more can one want? “Give me health and a day, and I will make the pomp of Emperors ridiculous.”

One may not be living in such a lowly estate and yet be poor; and, as a result of the war, there are many people who will need to cultivate a taste for poverty, or make up their mind to have a very bad time. Already some men known to me are facing the prospect without grumbling and without dismay. I know one man whose income is a third of what it was two years ago, although his outward position remains unchanged. He declares that poverty has simplified his life so much that, even if he had the opportunity, he would not go back to the old conditions in which a large income went in keeping up a large house and several servants. He is finding, in

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fact, that poverty has its compensations. I close by saying that a rich man could not have written *Wayside Wisdom*. So again, as often in the history of books, poverty has made another contribution to real literature.

VI

THERE are people who think the contents of a book are all that really matter—that the questions of type, paper, binding, are merely artistic considerations. This is a great blunder, as every true lover of books knows. The best books will often not give their real message in unsuitable get-up and format. They can never be quite dumb, for intelligence must speak at times or perish. But they are like people—they show to best advantage when they are dressed in well-fitting, suitable clothes. That is the secret of the book-lover's keen desire for original editions of favourite books. It has nothing to do with their greater monetary value, nor with the book-collector's lust to possess the first edition of the book before the author made his final corrections. These considerations weigh only with the book collector—a poor creature. The true value of a first edition is that it exhales a certain quality that is wholly lacking in reprints.

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It is difficult to keep from being snobbish about books. Indeed, books are themselves snobbish, notwithstanding many eloquent essays which assert that they are not. I do not believe that the best books like to be included in series of the same size, type, format, and price as a hundred or a thousand others. They do not like it, any more than an aristocrat would like to be compelled to dine at a shilling *table d'hôte*. The food might be good enough, but the uniformity would offend him. For the sake of those who cannot procure costly books, I am glad that cheap series multiply. But I will not believe that a sensitive mind can get from a cheap reprint, all that it would get from an original edition.

Books, it has been already said, are snobbish. I always knew that in a vague way, but lately I have had proof of it. Owing to circumstances—no matter what—my books have been divided. Some are in town, and others—the bulk—are in the country. Naturally, those that are in town, where my daily work lies, are carefully selected; those that are in the country are a mixture of all sorts. Now, I have discovered that the books on my town shelves have never changed their countenances towards me since I separated them from old companions;

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they have, in fact, grown more friendly. Those in the country, on the other hand, have grown decidedly cold to me when I pick them up during my week-ends. Especially is it the case with some that used to be most friendly: the old *rapport* is gone. The change is not in me, I am sure; it is in the books. They are, in fact, sulking.

This may be due to three causes, or one of three. There is, first of all, my comparative neglect of them. There is no surer way to estrange friendship of a certain kind than neglect. And books, being highly sensitive, feel this neglect as much as persons. They have known familiar friendship, and they will not give of their best when friendship becomes casual. This is hard on a man who must have his books in two places, and only spends one and a half days a week with a number of them who used to live with him always. But one can understand and respect the delicate proud resentment.

Or it may be owing to unfavourable conditions. When my books were all together they were in a beautiful hall in an old-fashioned house. Because they were in so conspicuous a place they had to be properly arranged, and the effect was very grand, almost noble, although there were no more

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than 2,000 volumes all told. I could go straight to any shelf and pick out just the book I wanted, just as can be done in real libraries. There was no sulking of friends in those days, although I was then, as now, a week-ender. In fact, I used to think they gave me more as the visitor of Saturday to Monday, than they used to give when they lived all the week with me. Of course, they were by no means neglected in the intervening days. The old dark-stained hall and the "lovely books" were the objects of much country admiration. But now, in another house, there is no "noble 'all," and no spare room for books. So they are divided into three groups—in dining-room, in drawing-room, and—the bulk—ranged along the walls of a passage, at the end of which a window opens on the garden. It is a queer fact that the books in the passage are sulking most. An outrage has been put on their dignity by being put in a thoroughfare.

Or it may be because they have uncongenial companionship. Because there is no picturesque hall to show them off, and no book room in which to make an atmosphere; the most of my country books are ~~shoved on~~ shelves, huddled up any way without the remotest attempt at classification. Now, you simply can't treat books in that way

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and expect them to smile at you. Books, like people, behave best when they are in the company of their social and intellectual equals. They are not true Bohemians, although they make great friendship with Bohemians of the right sort. It is interesting to reflect that it is the friendship of books that alone can keep Bohemianism from being in the last case objectionable.

VII

THE number of books on Germany is very large, and not a few are of considerable importance. But there is one still to be written, and just now it would be the most interesting of all—I mean a book on the German mind. The British people in this war, as in ordinary affairs, are of a judicial turn, and they always make allowance for the other man's point of view in a personal dispute. And when the evidence in favour of one side is multiplied, the man in the wrong is generally sportsman enough to acknowledge it, and begin again with a new view.

Blue It is not surprising that Germany should have failed to realize that she was in the wrong because our ~~White~~ Paper showed her to be in that position. There are always at least two interpretations possible, of any document or statement of "facts." It is quite likely, in fact it is now certain, that Germany really believes that her cause is right-

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eous, and that the sword was, as the Kaiser characteristically put it, "thrust" into her hand. One says Germany, because I mean the German people as a whole. Not for a moment is it possible to believe that the Kaiser and his War Lords take this innocent view. They know the truth. But because it is the people of Germany who take this view, we are faced with the interesting problem of the German mind. In face of the verdict of the whole civilized world, the German people honestly believe they have only gone to war to defend their Fatherland. How can this belief be accounted for?

We have the answer in a sentence of Bernhardt. "The Germans are the most docile people on the face of the earth . . . there is no people so unfitted to manage their own destiny." (I quote from memory.) We have here the suggestion of children in the hands of parent or teacher, with the important difference that the children never grow up. The Germans are perpetual children, a fact to which was due much of the charm that many American and English people found in German home life, and character, before the war. They are kept docile by being kept in ignorance of certain matters which their teachers think are beyond them. And the

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habit of docility in any people, degenerates into the most abject acceptance of the view and the will of the men who are directing their destiny. They do not attempt to understand the political view as between nations. As finally as any priest ever told a Catholic that only the Church could interpret the Scriptures, the German War Lords have assured the German people that they only can understand the political situation, and that Germany has been "attacked" by envious enemies.

But there is another side of the question of the German mind which is not so simple of understanding, or of setting forth. That is the kind of madness that has made Germany defy every power in the world, and violate every principle of humanity which civilized, not to say Christian, nations have hitherto observed even in war. Many people are, in fact, asking if this does not indicate true madness; if a nation may not go mad as well as an individual. I am not inclined to call it madness, except in so far as gross self-consciousness and vanity are a form of insanity. For the last twenty years Germany has been the most self-conscious nation in Europe, and the vainest. "Look at us and what we have done! Why does not Great Britain

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notice us? Why does she ignore us, the only people capable of challenging her world supremacy?" has been the formula of her self-praise and the burden of her complaint. Perhaps Great Britain ought to have "noticed" her. Perhaps if she had noticed her, the war might have been averted. Vain people are easily pleased.

It must be admitted that the Germans had good cause for pride. In the history of nations there is nothing comparable to the amazing rise and progress of the German Empire in forty-three years. Unfortunately the progress had been accomplished by the docility of the German people, and material success makes a subject people more docile and their masters more arrogant. There is no defender of the priest more staunch and violent than an ignorant docile mind; and again I find the simile apt. The German people have accepted the views of their teachers even when they are repugnant to their whole former view of life and morals, because they represent the views of men who have managed their destiny for them so successfully that in 1914 Germany, after forty odd years, was a World Power. Docility, success, and vanity, then, account for the German mind in its main manifestations.

The boastful self-assertion of Germany, from

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Kaiser downward, is the result of another form of self-conscious vanity hurt by the knowledge of its newness. Germany is the *nouveau venu* among nations; the rich person newly come into an estate and frightfully anxious to make servants and neighbours believe that he has been accustomed to these things all his life. When he finds that nobody is deceived, arrogance, insolent rudeness, and, facing opposition, violence are the results. In fact there is nothing more certain to bring out the lurking bad breeding of the newly-arrived than opposition.

That I take to be the true meaning of the German excesses in Belgium and in France. Did not the Kaiser, in a sentence uttered years ago, give the principle with admirable concise brevity and no unnecessary punctilio? *Him that opposes me I will crush.* Call that madness if you will; it is certainly vanity carried to the *n*th degree. And excessive vanity is incompatible with perfect sanity, if for no other reason than that it indicates an unhealthy self-obsession.

VIII

IS Scott a popular author? From a literary point of view, and apart from the possibility of this year seeing the rise of a new classic writer, the most important thing about 1914 is that it was the centenary of *Waverley*, the novel that started Scott on a literary career which to-day, after the lapse of a hundred years, is the most wonderful story that the history of authorship affords.

Modern readers of the Waverley novels, of any age under, say, thirty-five, may be pardoned if after vainly struggling to get up enthusiasm for the romances which thrilled their grandfathers, and which their fathers remained loyal to, they ask the question if, apart from the fact of Scott's great tragedy, these books would, on their merits, have won their way to the standard place they have kept so long.

There is some justification for the question; for

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tragic happenings in an author's career, if they are on a large scale, are more profitable to his name, fame, and perpetuation than a record of unbroken success. Just now, for example, Oscar Wilde's popularity is higher than it ever was during his life. I have no doubt the terrible tragedy which finished that author's career has had something to do with the present craze. It would not be surprising if Wilde were to become a kind of classic, yet on its merits his literary work, brilliant as it is, would hardly have won for him this coveted place.

There were, too, about Scott's tragedy all the elements that appeal to public imagination. The beginnings of the "great unknown"; the "white hand" at the back window of the house in Edinburgh, which fascinated the eager watcher as it tossed aside page after page of MS. with amazing rapidity; the launch of *Waverley* and the public enthusiasm, not only in Scotland but in London; the demand for the author's name, and the elaborate means that were taken to hide his identity; the suspicions, the "mintin and mooin" of those who were sure they knew the secret; the hot denials of authorship by Scott himself; the discovery and avowal, and the rush of new books that followed—all these were no bad aids

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to popularity, in a day when the romantic novel was practically a new thing in literature, and when the romancer was such a master of his craft as Walter Scott.

Add to this the great Abbotsford ambition and realization; and then the terrible *débâcle* of Constable and Ballantyne, which left the popular idol penniless, saddled with a huge debt which he determined to wipe out by new creations of his brain, and did to the extent of two-thirds or thereby of the sum; in addition, remember that while the eyes of two countries were witnessing the heroic struggle in amazed admiration, Scott was stricken down with his task unfinished, a broken, defeated man. Add finally that Lockhart brought together the record of all these things in a biography that remains indisputably one of the most human biographies of the world, and you have a fair excuse for wondering if Scott's permanent place is not due as much to the romance of his own life and the incomparable story of it, as to the series of fascinating romances known as the Waverley novels.

I do not make this suggestion from my own failure with Scott. True, I never fell under his spell—possibly because I was not introduced to him early enough. (Why, I do not know, seeing

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that many less admirable and as prolific writers were eagerly read in my youth.) One may have a very catholic literary taste, and yet find certain standard authors without interest.

Certainly I have never been a "superior person" in my attitude to the Waverley novels. On the contrary, I have always accepted the opinion of my betters—that Scott was easily the prince of novelists with a place in literature as secure as Shakespeare. There was no reserve of mind in this view, but only a sad feeling that my literary taste must be at fault, since I could not pretend, even to myself, to read Scott with enthusiasm. I do remember reading one of his books over two days, being absorbed by it, and thinking that at last I had had my dormant appreciation awakened. Alas, it was the *Pirate*, which Scott enthusiasts unite in saying is not characteristic of the author, and among the poorest of his stories.

My fear about the future of the Waverley novels is based on the unquestionable fact that, as far as my experience goes, the last generation had only a small knowledge of them, and the present generation knows them not at all. I believe that the sales of cheap editions are said to be still prodigious, but sales of cheap editions of standard books, as has been said over and over again, offer

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no trustworthy evidence of the number of their readers. My test is to ask every man of my acquaintance who looks young enough to be forty—that elastic age—“Of course, you put Scott’s novels highest among the fiction of the last hundred years?” I have met few who can answer triumphantly. As for younger men, they accept him “as read,” and a “classic,” but acquaintance at first hand they do not dream of claiming. They “have no time”—which is one of the most futile of excuses for ignorance of books. Further—and here I am on still stronger ground, from which I am ready to dogmatize—children of to-day, boys and girls from ten to sixteen, however artfully the Waverley novels are put in their way, fail to “sense” them as interesting—a bad sign.

Very different is the case with Dickens. In spite of superior critics, who find him vulgar and unreal, he is still an easy first favourite among all classes and with all ages. How many men, old, elderly, or really young, shall you find, to whom the principal characters in Dickens’ best-known books are not familiar at least by name? Very few; for my part I know of none. As for children; inquiries in various representative quarters justify me in saying that the boy and girl of to-day are as fascinated by Dickens as were those of a genera-

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tion and a half ago. It is notable, too, that in Dickens' novels, children do not pick and choose. They have favourites, but they devour them all. For interesting an average boy or girl on long winter nights, Dickens is unfailing.

I am apparently inconsistent in my foregoing remarks, since Dickens had no great calamity, as Scott had, to account for his enduring popularity. In truth, however, I made the point about Scott in order to make the contrast effective. Given such a literary output as Scott's, his great talent, his romantic career, and the closing tragedy of his life—a great biography may do a great deal towards creating a god whom the multitude will obediently bow down to, even if there is no worship in their hearts, but only much ignorance.

But with genius such as Dickens it is different. While Scott never had any detractors, Dickens had severe critics in his own day, and since his death the efforts to cast him out have been frequent and not inconsiderable. To-day he reigns supreme not only by virtue of a great name, but because he makes an eternal appeal to the human emotions, and this in spite of vulgarity of style, grotesquerie in characterization, and a rather offensive personal vanity.

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I am no Dickens enthusiast, but these are the facts of personal experience which justify me in thinking that for permanent popularity Dickens is rather more sure of a place than Scott. Meantime the men of the old school still make it a pious duty to read Scott through once a year, and they find it a yearly pleasure. I wish I could do it at all, for there are not a great many books that a second reading does not empty.

IX

I.

THE essay demands leisure as much as personality, and the best kind will not be written to order. At least, it must be written as much because the writer has something to say as because he expects to earn a guinea by it. I am not forgetful that Lamb's best essays were a feature of a periodical, of Hazlitt, of Goldsmith, and older writers, whose essays, living to-day, appear to have been written primarily for bread. But my argument is not upset by those cases. They can be explained by suggesting that those older writers had genius, and that no matter what were the conditions under which they wrote, they were for the moment dominated entirely by their genius and utterly forgetful of the impulse which drove their pen to paper. Think of Goldsmith's work in prose and verse; and with the full knowledge of his poverty and the circumstances under which some of his best work was done, ask whether one can believe that Goldsmith was not utterly

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oblivious of his poverty and sordid surroundings while he wrote. Lamb had no compulsion of poverty, but only of genius, and he wrote because he could not help writing. There is not the smallest forced touch about Lamb's essays. They are the spontaneous expression of a charming personality, very much in love with life, keenly interested in humanity, and passionately devoted to literature.

The case of Hazlitt is more difficult. When he was dying he wrote to Lord Jeffrey, who was stopping a few days with Carlyle at Craigenputtock, "For God's sake send me £10, I am dying," and unfortunately it represents all but the normal condition under which many of his essays were written—under the stress of absolute poverty. But no one can read these essays to-day—seventy years later—without feeling the intensity of personality in them which at the moment of writing made the essayist forget his needs, and mindful only of the subject, the picture, the play, the persons about which, about whom, he was writing. Otherwise, how account for his essays on the English stage? The names of the actors of that time are forgotten; the burning questions relating to their art of that day have little mean-

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ing now. Yet these essays are as living now as the true voice of a real man, as they were when they were written. A man needs to have knowledge to write an essay, but he can never write anything worthy of the name of essay, unless his soul and personality have free course in it.

Then come to a more modern case about which, whom, everybody who knows books can offer an opinion—R. L. Stevenson. It is too soon to speak of immortality in connexion with so recent a writer, yet one may be fairly certain that some of Stevenson's essays will become classic, without being unduly presumptuous. *Virginibus Puerisque*, for example—it is very difficult to think of another generation being indifferent to that book, which seems to us to-day, or did at least before the war, so wise with such broadly human wisdom, so gracious with sympathy in which there is always lurking humour; so delicately finished, not because the mind of the writer was delicate, but because the artist in him demanded that the message of the "Shorter Catechist" should be carried on the finest-tempered and chased Damascus blade. As I write I am conscious that this is the description of an extraordinary personality.

One thing I am quite sure of—no man who

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writes an article weekly, no matter what his literary gifts, can make essays worthy of preservation, unless he forgets the particular audience whom he is addressing.

II.

I HAVE been reading essays the last few days, and for lack of attractive new books have been re-reading old ones—one forty years old, *Dreamthorp*, and the other only a tenth of that age, *The Lowly Estate* by an anonymous author. One is already established as a classic, and the other—who knows what may be its fate? At present the newer writer is only known to a few, yet before me lies a letter from a correspondent who says, “It is good news to hear of a new book by the author of —; but I should be better pleased if you could tell me of a new book by the author of *The Lowly Estate*.”

It is interesting to contrast the views of the authors of these two books on such a subject as Winter. Says Alexander Smith: “Of all the seasons of the year I like winter best. . . . The day is short, and I can fit it with work; when evening comes I have my lighted room and my books. Should black care haunt me, I can throw it off the scent in Spenser’s forests, or seek refuge

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from it among Shakespeare's men and women. . . . I am sitting at this present moment with my curtains drawn. . . . An imaginative sense of the cold outside increases my present comfort"; and so on over two pages of a winter Christmas evening, spent indoors with a bright fire burning and books inviting communion.

Turn now to *The Lowly Estate*. Says the writer: "All my life winter has had a certain terror for me. . . . When I was at school I piled all my clothes on the bed and then crept shivering between the sheets, wishing it wasn't 'not cricket' to go to bed in your socks, and then lay staring through the blindless, curtainless windows. And presently I would find first one and then another star becoming visible in the clear night. . . . The beauty of that ordinary phenomenon was balm to the soul of the boy who was still too cold to sleep. But he never ceased to feel some fear of winter."

Reading both essays through, my instinctive feeling is that the one by the newer author is more true to human experience. There *is* a terror in Winter to an imaginative mind, and he has expressed it in words which every sensitive mind must feel reflect a real experience. The one man sat down to write an essay on Christmas,

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and found it necessary to adopt an attitude to winter which looks only on the "jovial" element of that season. The other found signs of a "hard winter," and the old terror seizing him, he wrote quite simply of a real emotion. Alexander Smith perhaps knew the terror of winter, but suppressed his knowledge for a conventional idea; the other man speaks "right out," and gets not only on the target of a common human feeling, but makes a bull's-eye.

Besides, the two books give evidence that the essays are the work of two men who were alike only in this—that they were both poor. For the rest they were wholly different, in upbringing and in domestic conditions. *Dreamthorp* is the work of a native genius, a bachelor living by his books and making a poor but sufficient subsistence. *The Lowly Estate* appears to be the work of a scholar, a married man and a father of children, whose income is never much above the living line. The view, of a bachelor, and a married man, on the subject of winter, must of necessity be very different. "Put a ton of coal in my cellar and a load of wood in my shed and I front the world with a spirit very different from that which animates me when the last hundredweight of coal is almost

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exhausted, and the price of the ton is wanted for several pairs of boots." It is not Alexander Smith who says this, but the other man, who in a thunderstorm when one of the children was nervous, "lay down on a couch with her, talking volubly as the storm grew nearer," and he expressed a feeling that can never be felt in its intensity by men of humble upbringing.

But, spite of his uneasiness, when winter gave signs of approach, he has the imaginative man's gift of seeing beauty, and getting compensation even from the thing he dreads. He sees "miracles of powdered loveliness in woods and hedgerows, unimagined colour schemes in the fields—red on the leeward and silver on the windward side of the furrows, blood-red on the willow patches, green and blue and smoke-grey in the receding pastures. . . . Shy birds venturing to the bisected cocoanuts hung outside the window . . . field mice slipping out of the shadows to glean some of the spilled grain . . . a stoat gliding lithe and furtive with a dead bird in its mouth." Read Chapter XXXVI of *The Lowly Estate*, and I mistake if you do not vote for the writer as a better essayist in that chapter at least than the man who wrote "Christmas" in *Dreamthorp*.

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I started meaning only to write one paragraph on two essays, and I have not done yet, for I find myself dipping into other familiar essays in both books and tempted to quote extracts. One of Alexander Smith's, "A Shelf in My Bookcase," must suffice for the present. He is contrasting Hawthorne's "Twice Told Tales" with his great novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, and wondering why he finds himself against the popular judgment which places greater store by the latter than by the former, and he says: "I think my liking consists in this—that the novels were written for the world, while the tales were written for the author. . . . Consequently one gets nearer him, just as one gets nearer an artist in his first sketch than in his finished picture. And, after all, one takes the greater pleasure in those books in which a peculiar personality is most clearly revealed." I quote this because it gives the essential difference between "Christmas" in *Dreamthorp* and Chapter XXXVI in *The Lowly Estate*. Add to this, that there are tears under all human life, and you will understand why the one essay leaves a reader unmoved, while the other goes straight to his heart.

X

IN one of Mr. A. C. Benson's most recent essays, he says that all stories and novels are the story of an escape. The thought is not new, and, to mention only one instance that comes to my mind, it is hinted at in one of Mark Rutherford's books—*The Deliverance*, I believe. Only, he goes further than Mr. Benson; he says that *all art* is an attempt at escape. On first sight a dictum such as this seems merely a "clever" remark, but, pondered a little, it becomes so obvious that the wonder grows that we have not known its truth always. We are all seeking ways of escape.

It is not surprising, then, to learn from a recent correspondence in *The Daily News* that the demand for novels at the great libraries is as brisk just now as it was before the war; other books are not markedly wanted. The war, in its long drawn-out nature, is apt to get on the

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nerves. There are thousands of people who cannot get it out of their minds. For them there is no escape at all. It is one compensation of the reading habit, that at a time like this—indeed, on every occasion of strain—it provides a way of escape. Wars, financial embarrassments, family troubles—they can all be assuaged, can indeed be temporarily forgotten, if the sufferer has been in normal life addicted to books. Just now it is harder to escape than it would be if the war were on a smaller scale, and involved less tremendous issues. Even in cases where the reading habit is inveterate, a real effort has to be made before one can escape from the day's news, or lack of news, and the anxieties that either may have brought. In the case of people who only read books occasionally, I should imagine they would find it almost impossible to read an ordinary book just now, apart from novels. Hence it comes that while even "serious" books on the war—so called because most of them were sensational—have lost their thrill, and real literature is almost wholly neglected, there is an eager rush for fiction. A thrilling story is, for the majority, perhaps, the surest way of escape.

A few days ago I was talking with an intelligent but uneducated man, who made the

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remark that what was wanted just now was books that, "so to speak, take you out of yourself." He apologised for the form in which the idea was expressed, as perhaps not being "quite literary," quite unconscious that literature has no higher function than to take one out of oneself. To be taken out of oneself—there is escape, indeed.

I suppose the simpler the type of mind, the more easily will it find a way out of itself. One cannot doubt that the cheaper, commoner forms of amusement do succeed in their primary aim, which is to take their audience out of the world of their everyday work, or idleness, or care, into an imaginary one where the other is forgotten. Obviously, these entertainments would only bore minds of more subtlety, of keener perception, or more cultivated taste. Happily, there are different ways of escape for different types, and so we can all find a way out of ourselves, by some occupation or some recreation that we know of. But for this, thousands would be driven to madness, who, as it is, manage with these intervals to keep sane.

It is common to think of religion as the thing that offers the surest escape, and there is a view of religion of which this is true. But it is equally

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true that another view of religion simply drives one into oneself, so that although a certain surcease from sorrow may result, it is achieved by a kind of smug attitude, which can never have the divine *ekstasis* attending a real escape. For myself, there are two escapes that never fail me. One is the great prose poems of the Old Testament—the other is my secret.

One rarely comes across a novel nowadays which absorbs one so completely that everything but the story is for the time forgotten. Is it that there are no great novels about in these days, or merely that one gets to be more exacting, or—horrible thought—that the romance of life makes less appeal than it did in the days when the “great novels” held one captive? Or is it simply that the added knowledge of the years, growing responsibilities, the cares of this world, choke the word, so that the great novels of a later day fail to influence us?

There is a way of escape that some find unfailing, which is not connected with entertainments, or recreation, or literature. Its way is by a deliberate elevation of the mind into a region where the things of everyday simply do not enter, and where, as a consequence, one is shut out and shut in. There is no greater privilege than to be

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able to get into that region, and for those who have the right of way, there is no duty more important than to keep it open. Always it requires a conscious effort to get there, but habit makes the effort less every time it is made. On the other hand, desuetude makes the way difficult, and so it comes about that now and again, people whom we expected to show resource and resistance, break down under great trouble. They had lost their only way of escape.

XI

I SAW somewhere the other day an interesting series of notes on Anthologies *apropos* of the most recent, *Poems of To-day*, an excellent selection, as I discovered from a hasty examination a few weeks ago, but lacking in the balance of judgment that would, rightly, have excluded R. L. Stevenson from a list of Poets of To-day, not to speak of Meredith and one or two others who are emphatically not modern. That book has stirred in me a reflection of how numerous Anthologies have become, how small is my acquaintance with this class of literature, and how few achieve great popularity. Still smaller is the number of those that survive.

My first discovery as a boy, of the anthology as literature, was Percy's *Reliques of English Poetry*. My copy was an old edition, so beautifully printed that although the *Reliques* was at

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the time only a name to me, the pages made me ready to believe that they must be very good. They were, of course, and later I found that I had "discovered" a book that had for long been a classic. As a fact, the *Reliques* is in several cheap series. But how many people are familiar with the book nowadays? Very few, I venture to say.

The next Anthology I made the acquaintance of was *The Golden Treasury*. I tried to love it, because a man who led my young feet in the way of literature assured me that this volume represented the very finest. No doubt it does, but I have not looked into the book for years; in fact, I doubt if there is a copy on my bookshelves. Of more modern anthologies I have looked into many, but have never discovered one that I wanted to carry in my pocket, or keep by my chair at night to dip into over a last pipe. Yet several important anthologies have been published during the last twenty years, and a number of them have achieved real popularity. At one time this inability to admire fine anthologies rather troubled me, but nowadays I am quite complacent about it. This is a day of "scraps" in literature, and I am glad my taste abhors scraps of all kinds. Thus defending my limita-

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tion, I admit that, by reason of it, I must miss gems I should be glad to discover.

An extraordinarily revealing book to me was the book of Georgian Verse. For the last ten years I have watched with pleasure the rising quality of the new poetry; but when I dipped into the book of Georgian Verse I found that my knowledge of modern poets and their work was almost ignorance. So many poets of whom I had never heard, so much poetry of really fine quality having appeared in slender volumes which had never come my way! Another anthology which added to my knowledge was *The Dublin Book of Irish Verse*. That is not an entirely modern gathering; it is comprehensive of Irish literature; it is of extraordinarily fine quality; and it has the spiritual atmosphere one finds chiefly in Celtic writers. That is a book that I can dip into often.

In my view, the anthology is not really for the lover of literature, unless he is restricted by the want of means, or other circumstances, from having many books. I never can find any satisfaction in reading a selection from authors whose books I have read. True, these selections may be gems, and gems have their intrinsic value, howsoever they may be acquired. But

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how much more thrilling to discover them for yourself ! There is a "Pocket Stevenson," for example, greatly and properly prized by a large number of readers. My copy was given to me by a friend, now dead, and for his sake I tried to make it a companion as he did. But before my friend had passed I gave up the pretence of enjoyment in the book. Now it is out of sight, and I take my Stevenson neat with great enjoyment, when I take him at all. But for me R.L.S. is out of place just now.

There is another consideration. In any book in which there are flashing phrases and acute epigrams, every fresh reading brings new discoveries, so that the book is never stale. And the fact that these beauties and *sententiæ* are in the middle of pages of more commonplace material, gives them a quality and a splendour beyond that which they have when they are separated from their context. Nowadays I read very often an author whom for years I underrated, although I hold practically my original view about his philosophy and its effect on the reader—I mean Mark Rutherford. No matter how often I read his books, I come upon new passages of profound reflection, often of singular beauty, which instinctively I want to mark.

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Take one, for example, of several I marked the other night in reading the *Deliverance*. The author is speaking of the mortification that comes to a man when the conviction is forced on him that he is *insignificant*, that there is "nothing much in him." And thus he comments: "It is a bitter experience. And yet there is consolation. The universe is infinite. In the presence of its celestial magnitudes, who is there who is really great or small, and what is the difference between you and me, my work and yours? I sought refuge in the idea of God, the God of a starry night, with its incomprehensible distances; and I was at peace, content to be the meanest worm of all the millions that crawl on the earth." Here is a profound and beautiful passage that in any setting could hardly fail to attract. But even as I quote it, the conviction rushes on me that divorced from the context which led to the fine outburst, it would lose the atmosphere that gives it its chief distinction.

Another reason of my distaste for the anthology is that it affords too easy an opportunity of acquiring sham erudition. One knows of many people who have their whole intellectual being in these extracts. One can judge how shallow

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it is, how little progressive and of how little significance. It is too easily concluded that to read extracts is to beget a desire to read the books from which they are taken. If the desire is ever begotten it is still-born. I believe, however, that it rarely comes to birth.

XII

I.

I SPENT Christmas Eve and Christmas Day re-reading Froude's *Life of Carlyle*, after an interval of about half a dozen years. I do not know how often I have read it, but probably it is not less than a dozen times. Always I find its fascination lay hold on me, so that begin it when I may, there is no option but to go on till it is finished. There are few novels that stand this test, and fewer biographies. For this reason I rank Froude's *Carlyle* among the greatest of biographies, just as for the same reason I place *Jane Eyre* among the greatest novels of the world. Both books are, by virtue of their literary qualities, enduring classics ; but, what is rarer, they hold an enduring spell because of their great and intense humanity.

Looking back, one is amazed to discover what a storm of acrimonious controversy these four volumes raised ; what abuse they brought

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upon Froude's head ; what violent vindication of Carlyle they evoked from his too strenuous admirers who saw in the author's convincing life portrait, nothing nobler than an attempt to glorify himself at the expense of the teacher whom he called "Master." It was said of Froude that, like Judas of old, he had, under cover of a kiss, betrayed his friend into the hands of those who batten upon the scandal about great moral teachers.

It seems hardly credible in these days, that the publication of Carlyle's life cost Froude some of his oldest friendships, but so it was. There were men in influential positions of all kinds who "cut" him in the streets, as the "righteous" occasionally cut those who have been guilty of grave moral offences. Yet the only offence of which the great historian was guilty was that, faced with the question whether he was to paint a portrait that would show Carlyle faultless, or as he really was—more than ordinarily human, Froude chose to show him as one of the noblest, purest personalities that ever lived, but with a man's weakness. The public believed he had been something of a god, and finding Froude's picture not to their liking, they cast the artist out. The result was a

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mighty pothor; about one of the greatest biographies, which, after thirty years, has lost nothing of its extraordinary spell.

I take for granted that everybody knows the outstanding facts of Carlyle's life, and the principal causes of the long-drawn-out domestic tragedy, which only ended when his wife died in her brougham, after the excitement caused by rescuing a favourite dog from being run over. There is thus no need to recapitulate a thrice-told tale; but it may be permissible, after all these years, to look back at that strangely-gifted, strangely-assorted pair, and try to discover on which side the greater fault lay. The question can never be settled, but numerous as have been the essays on the subject, it will always maintain its interest, and attract the student of human psychology. More certainly than the Shelleys, the Carlyles, not one, but both, will offer subjects for ever new controversy and new views. And all because Froude had the courage to paint two intensely human souls from the material that their own letters and reminiscences supplied! Other questions apart, the lover of English literature would be ungrateful to quarrel with Froude over a domestic tragedy which enabled him to create such a master-piece.

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In my latest reading it seems to me clearer than ever, that the first and deepest cause of the Carlyle unhappiness was that Jane Welsh married Thomas Carlyle for ambition, knowing that she was capable of passion, and that the man she selected for husband could never arouse it. I am not so sure that Edward Irving was the love of her life. No doubt she had a girlish admiration for that wayward genius in his bizarre youth, but probably it was no more than the romantic attachment which idealistic girls rarely escape. It is certain—if in the whole queer story anything is certain—that Irving could not have been permanently satisfactory to Jane Welsh if she had married him.

Her married life with Carlyle was, as Froude says, a long-drawn-out tragedy; but it was never lacking in something of nobleness, and it had its compensations—increasing fame, influence, friends, and the like. The common-sense of the shrewd little Scotswoman would have felt distrustful of the meteor period in Irving's life, and one can imagine what she would have had to say about the "gift of tongues"! And Mrs. Carlyle does not fit into the rather sordid picture which poor Irving's later days present.

All this may—must—be admitted, and yet

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one comes back to the cardinal blunder of Jane Welsh's life—she married for ambition, knowing all the time it was not love. She got the reward she bargained for—perhaps a more commonplace reward would equally have failed to satisfy her. But she played with the greatest force in life, and love had its revenge. Listen to her despairing cry: "*Carlyle*," she wrote to a friend, "*has exceeded my wildest ambitions, and I am not happy.*"

Jane Welsh made another blunder. She was an exceptionally well cultivated woman, of brilliant and original gifts, who, if a man had not crossed her way, seemed destined for a literary career. She knew this, had strivings after such a future, and unmistakable signs of ambition. One can see how independent her mind was, in the letters which she sent to Carlyle while he was pressing his suit, and, indeed, almost up to the time when she became engaged to him.

Had she lived in our day, the probability is that, weighing the chances of an independent career with the position which offered to her as the wife of a young man of genius she would have gone in for a career of her own. In her young days, however, the emancipation of woman had not begun, and "blue stocking" carried a

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reproach that was to that age more disqualifying than obscurity. So she chose self-repression in marriage with a man of whose future she was confident, and thus made happiness for ever impossible. For a while she was contented in the domestic cage, humble though it was ; in fact, the only approach to married happiness was probably in those early days at Comely Bank, in Edinburgh, when she was practising the young housewife on painfully inadequate means, and too little of her husband's companionship.

Thereafter her life became one series of struggles to escape from herself—in one instance at least, from him, and from life itself. Then death did for her what she had failed to do for herself—set her free, just when her husband had put the crown on his life-work by his Rectorial address at Edinburgh University. He came back to find her at peace. Thereafter his life was spent in remembering his love and her excellences. "Poor Jeannie." Yes, no doubt, but poor Carlyle, too.

II.

So far, briefly and roughly enough, the faults of Jane Welsh. What about Thomas Carlyle ? There was no question about the romance of

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his love. In all his letters to her—he was a faithful and voluminous correspondent in his various absences from home—not to speak of his “Reminiscences” written after she was dead, there is not the remotest hint that to the end, the romantic affection of his youth had ever been deflected a hair’s breadth from his wife, or shared by any other woman. No, in this at least, Froude shows a man whom Carlyle worshippers could not improve on—a husband absolutely faithful in deed and in thought, throughout a long and trying relationship. Was, then, the tragedy due only to Jane Welsh, her blunder, her ambition, her temper and her jealousy? Very far from it. When I said that Carlyle found in Jane Welsh the romantic love of his life, and that he was utterly faithful to it during all the years that followed, I was not forgetful of the “Blumine” romance familiar to every reader of *Sartor*. There is no reason to believe, however, that on Carlyle’s side it was anything more than the passing fascination of the beautiful, half-Oriental creature, Kitty Fitzpatrick, whom he met in Irving’s home at Islington. The reference to the romance in *Sartor* is ironically humorous; the tone is that in which one describes romantic but foolish episodes of youth.

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Forty years later, when Carlyle was an old man and the "Begum" was herself middle-aged, the lady called on the man whom in a girlish infatuation she liked to think of as her lover. Carlyle wrote a letter after the visit which may be read by the curious. There is not the remotest suggestion in that letter of a buried passion. The only writer I remember who treats the incident seriously is Lady Russell of Swallowfield. In her book, *The Rose Goddess*, she says that Carlyle would have been happier with the "Begum," but she would have hindered his career. Jane Welsh, on the other hand, aided in its splendid fulfilment.

Carlyle's chief defect as the husband of the little lady, Jane Welsh, was that he was a peasant and kept, socially, a peasant's point of view all his life. It was entirely to his credit that he remained proud of, and in close touch with, his parents and brothers and sisters, rude in habits and manners as most of them were. But it shows either a kind of insolent pride, or indifference, that he should have expected his wife, a lady in all senses of the term, to be even as they were, and to settle cheerfully to duties which she had formerly seen done only by servants. I do not refer to the Craigenputtock days alone.

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Up to the last ten years of their married life, Carlyle allowed his wife to drudge as no woman of her upbringing and health should be expected to drudge by her husband, unless in the direst extremities.

The amazing thing is how she did it without complaint, and without suggesting that he might, with profit to both, help her in exhausting duties. No ; Mrs. Carlyle was as faithful to her marriage vows as her husband. He was faithful, and she was obedient. But one wonders what would have happened if one day his drudge had rebelled, and told him to scrub the floor himself ; or cook his own dinner when no help was to be obtained ; or wring the neck of the crowing cock that disturbed his slumbers in Cheyne Row. As it was, Carlyle began married life as lord and master, looking on while his wife slaved, and to the end his wife never rebelled outwardly.

The physical hardships of married life as a poor man's wife were not the worst trials for Mrs. Carlyle. In the early years at least, at Comely Bank and Craigenputtock, she suffered from desperate loneliness. She married to be a companion to a man of genius, and found that her lot was to wash and bake for the great man, whom she was to see nothing of except for a

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brief hour at night. To him any hardship in such a lot was inconceivable. He had his work, and found what of happiness there was possible for him by doing it. She had her work, too. What more could be wanted by any woman, if she lived with the man of her choice and worked for him, as his mother had lived with and worked for his father and the family which she bore ?

The truth is, Carlyle never had an idea that his wife was capable of an independent intellectual life even as he was, and had as much right to be considered. One cannot blame him too much, for those were not the days of revolting woman. But if there had been a finer strain in Carlyle he would have instinctively done something to equalize their lots. One knows of more than one young couple who are happily married, and yet each following separate careers. In such households the husband takes his full share of domestic duties, which, devolving solely upon a wife, would spell drudgery.

A cardinal fault of Carlyle's was vanity. In a passage in his early diary he asks, "Am I not one of the vainest of men ?" And one instinctively and irritably says, "My good man, you were ; and that is the secret of all your growling, of your ill-natured remarks about everybody but

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your own family, your volcanic outpourings which were taken for the wrath of a nineteenth-century prophet. Yes, even of the dyspepsia, which made you a trial in every household in which you were a guest."

Vanity is the curse of Scottish intellectual youth, and the Scottish clever peasant has more than an ordinary share. Let it be granted that Carlyle was a divinely gifted man—no man born of woman has a right to bear himself so contemptuously towards his fellows as, through his letters, and *Reminiscences*, thanks to Froude, we know he did. With another kind of school training that priggishness would have been kicked out of the boy. The circle he was brought up in merely encouraged it. And Carlyle's vanity was the root of much of the unhappiness of the home at Chelsea. "When a man marries he domesticates the Recording Angel," and one can believe that as the angel is a woman, vanity will be the weakness which she will soonest discover, and least easily condone.

One comes to the Lady Ashburton matter with reluctance, and with a feeling that it was the culmination of a lifelong unhappiness, rather than the explanation of the miserable letters that record the various rows to which the con-

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nection gave rise. If there had been no Bath House and Grange, to which Carlyle resorted, and no beautiful great lady on whom he danced attendance, Jane Welsh Carlyle would still have been an unhappy woman. As a fact, she was at the time of life when jealousy, in the ordinary sense, is generally dead in a wife or husband.

That she was jealous in the vulgar sense is hardly possible. It is not conceivable that she suspected an intrigue. But she found her husband willing to come and go at the bidding of Lady Ashburton for the purpose of entertaining her and her friends, and the thought humiliated Mrs. Carlyle. Not only that, but he insisted on his wife also accepting the "invitations" (they were really commands), in spite of the fact that he knew the women were incompatible.

She obeyed as a dutiful wife, but she went with fury in her heart, and each time returned to her home worse than she had gone forth. And, knowing all these experiences of misery, Carlyle insisted on her paying attention to the great lady, who flattered his vanity by appearing to treat him as a social equal. One can say quite firmly that, given the conditions, Mrs. Carlyle made sacrifices such as no woman

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is called upon to make, even for a husband. For Carlyle, no excuse is to be found or made.

What is the conclusion of the whole matter of the Carlyles? This, that they were neither of them born for happiness; that the man, by reason of a certain selfishness and an undeniable vanity, got as much happiness by his marriage to Jane Welsh as he could have got in a more romantic union; and that the woman got less than her share, because of her initial blunder and her complete subservience to her husband.

I have purposely ignored reference to the physical side of the Carlyle married relations, because the theory rests upon too slender a basis of fact to be accepted, and at best takes too limited a view of the relations of a man and woman. The relations of Lewes and George Eliot, for example, were perfect, without any kind of passion, and without the woman fulfilling herself in maternity. No, the Carlyles were unhappy because they were so constituted that they could not help being so. If any moral is to be pointed, it perhaps is that clever men and clever women are likely to agree best in any other relation than that of marriage.

XIII

I KNOW of nothing more delightful than to introduce a good book to the right mind. It is a privilege which is its own reward ; but if, in addition, the reader remembers and thanks the man who brought about the introduction, he is rich indeed in reward. The best kind of mind, of course, always does remember, and always feels grateful. If this seems self-complacent it is inevitable ; it is difficult to believe it can be the best type of mind that forgets great benefits. There are people like that about, though, even among those who are fond of books. They could not for their life tell how they came by any book on their shelves—I mean how they were induced to buy it, even when the introduction brought pleasure to them. I have known of cases where a man has recommended another to read a certain author to whom he was himself introduced by that very

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man. One can conceive of few more grievous offences. It is intellectually of the same grossness as the social offence of stealing a friend from another who had generously brought about the introduction.

It is one of my constant pleasures that I can remember the history of all my favourite books, the circumstances under which they came to me, the friend who introduced them, the impression of a first reading, and the result. And the mere writing of this fact reminds me that it is a reminiscence of a good many years ago—that, in fact, the majority of my “favourite books” are by no means “books of to-day.”

One wonders why it is so ; if it must be so. Certainly, it is from no prejudice against, or ignorance of, modern books, of which I read as many as the most of men, even among those whose calling makes books easy of access. I will not be caught saying anything so foolish as that the newer authors are not so good as the old. It is my conviction that they are—to the newer generation. It is equally certain, and wholesome to know, that the favourite authors of one generation are rarely the favourites of the generation succeeding.

One of the penalties of growing up, of grow-

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ing older, of becoming old, is that we cannot make new contemporaries. If when one became thirty, one could be contemporary with young men of twenty; or at forty with the man of thirty—why, if the thing could be done it would be an ideal world, and our riches in friends, in books would be colossal. And yet would that be an advantage? Would not there be an embarrassment? Is not something of the intensity of affection dissipated in proportion as it is distributed over many and changing objects?

The secret joy of many men's lives, is that it is old schoolfellows, old college pals and the like, living still and growing older at the same rate of progress as themselves, with whom they have to compare notes, and not with the new men of the new generation. This thought alone, makes for an intensity of friendship which could never be known if we had contemporaries in every generation. And as with men, so with books. As long as a man is receptive and growing, he can make an occasional new friend. But they can never be to him as those friends of early years who hold and register the record and progress of his life.

Failing new books to my liking, I have recently been reading, fairly constantly, a handful of old

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ones which have been neglected for years. I have, for example, read again Washington Irving's *Life of Goldsmith*, a delightful book which is too little known, and is not, I think, included in any of the cheap series. Goldsmith is never failing in the charm of his personality, and no sketch known to me presents him in such a winsome picture. Washington Irving's *Sketch Book* never interested me, and as a writer I do not put him in the front rank. But his *Life of Goldsmith*, who is one of the most attractive figures in English literature, deserves to live.

It would be misleading to say that during the war I have re-read Hazlitt, for his volumes have been always at my elbow for many years. But certainly I have read the *Table Talk* more frequently the last few months. The fascination of Hazlitt is that he is still so intensely alive in his essays. In any time of trouble, an original and stimulating personality has the power to take you out of yourself, and if Hazlitt is to your liking, you are safe to forget the War in his company. There is little or no "charm" about him, but there is undying and vigorous life.

One passes naturally from Hazlitt to W. E. Henley—two men who had much in common, and not least, their great virility. Henley was

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the burlier, bigger man, but he had no keener zest of life than Hazlitt. Lately I re-read the poems and a number of the essays. In my opinion Henley's essays are doomed to be forgotten completely. Hayward's essays were of better quality, but who knows Hayward to-day? Henley's were, in fact, not so good as the author thought they were—probably they were in the same category as Hazlitt's paintings. But the poems—it is difficult to believe that there is not the immortal stuff in many of them. Quite apart from the wonderful Hospital verses, there are a fairly large number of poems that demand, and will almost certainly get, a permanent place, as permanent as Hazlitt's essays have attained to, with as big a circle of readers. No author could want a better fate.

Stevenson, for some reason or other, has not appealed to me so much lately. Even *Virginibus Puerisque*, which I used to classify as the most heartening book known to me, has lost its invigorating power. I wonder if it is because I know that the author never lived through such a time as this, that his courage seems a jaunty thing, an affectation that tries the patience and loyalty even of an old admirer. No doubt this is an unworthy thought which will pass with the

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abnormal time. But at present Stevenson is not among my familiars.

After such a confession it will cause no surprise when I say that the book I have re-read most lately is *Amiel's Journal*. There is rarely a week when I do not read many of its pages, and when I am "dipping" into many books Amiel can never be resisted. This requires an explanation, but I am not going to attempt to give it. I admit that Amiel was not a cheerful person, that he was morbidly introspective, that he lived, and knew that he lived, an unnatural life, to which he became as firmly addicted as an opium eater to his weed, that consequently his views became one-sided, partial and warped. Yet during the War I have read *Amiel's Journal* more frequently than any other book, and I have not been touched by his pessimism. On the other hand, I have invariably found refreshment in his constantly recurring exquisite nature descriptions, and have shared in the emotions which they aroused in him. And as Amiel at least saw things *sub specie æternitatis*, he has helped me to view the War with patience and some understanding.

XIV

I MAKE no pretence of being up to date, so I need not apologize for saying that the other day I made the acquaintance of Mr. Arnold Bennett for the first time in *Clayhanger*. One has heard much of Mr. Bennett, of course, during these past three or four years ; in fact, it may be that hearing so much about him made me indifferent. The feeling is unworthy, no doubt, but in literary matters it is often justified. The author whom everybody talks about, is not always the author of permanence or significance. I suppose that by refusing to read every author who is highly praised, one occasionally loses ; certainly if this author had never come my way I should have missed a writer of some significance. But my experience convinces me that no really significant and worthy book fails eventually to come to its own readers. It may be a long time before the introduction is effected, but good

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books, like fine natures, improve in the keeping, and one has a pleasant sense of exclusiveness in reading an author after the furore about him or her has died down.

Clayhanger is, I believe, one of Mr. Bennett's best stories, and from the page in the middle of the book into which I dipped and then worked backward to begin at the beginning and keep on till the end, I found it very good. But the conviction is firm in my mind, if *Clayhanger* is characteristic, that Mr. Bennett is not the biggest kind of writer. From beginning to end there is no lifting of the cloud of dull commonplace that hangs over the town in which the story is set, and the lives of the characters who are so minutely depicted. There is never one of those rare moments which come occasionally into every life; when something in one breaks, and a warm emotion sweeps through one, to which no name can be given, for which no cause can be assigned. Or a wind blows, or a cloud parts, and in the aromatic wind and the heavenly blue, we get a moment's impression of what the soul of man is endlessly seeking. Or in the rapture of religious discovery, when the soul says to itself, this it is that thou hast sought so long. Of one of these raptures I find no hint at all in *Clayhanger*.

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As a result, it was rather a depressing book to me. Also it raised in my mind the old question whether unrelieved realism in which there is no vision, can be the highest literary art.

Instinctively three or four books came to my mind after reading *Clayhanger*. I thought of Balzac's *Père Goriôt*, of George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss*, of Gissing's *New Grub Street*, of Mark Rutherford's various books. Realism is in every one of these, and in some of them a kind of grey sordidness in which there is only depression. But not even Balzac's great story is without "that fine innuendo by which the soul makes its enormous claim," to use Emerson's magnificent phrase. For art and literary craftsmanship *Clayhanger* could be compared with any or all of these and not be put to shame. And yet one would hesitate to put it in the same company. Why? Because it is wholly lacking in "that fine innuendo," that hint of beautiful antithesis which redeems the most sordid of lives. I am not concerned just now to inquire whether all lives are so redeemed. I think they are, but that does not affect my view that literature of the highest kind must always believe, as great art in any department has always believed, in that redeeming element.

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The effect of the one type of book upon me is a feeling of gladness, of great relief, of beauty, of infinite hope. The other brings depression, burden, and a sense of futility which finds explanations of, and even excuse for, the sufferers who take a short cut to the end.

XV

THE colloquial and common use of the word “significance” is in the sense of importance, as of something that matters. Significance in literature, to me, means this and more. A standard book which appeared in a bygone generation may still be a book that matters, by reason of its thought, but for me it is not a book of significance, although in its day it may have been. Wordsworth’s Sonnets to Liberty, for example, were of enormous significance when they appeared, because they expressed a feeling that was then stirring throughout the world as a consequence of the French Revolution. The importance of these sonnets can never die as long as men value more “the shade of a shade, and a thing seen not with the eyes,” than material things, or even life itself ; but they are not of immediate significance. If, however, a great demand were to spring up for them just now, that would be

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significant that the spirit of liberty was again stirred, and that the sonnets once more were the expression of a national feeling.

The Waverley novels were significant—not in a moral, but in an artistic sense—because they began a tendency which became a trend towards the romantic in literature. They are still of importance to-day, although I cannot conceive of myself calling them significant, except in the past tense. George Eliot, on the other hand, was always a writer who mattered, who was of importance ; but I think it would not be correct to call her a novelist of significance, since she represented no tendency in thought or art, although her point of view and method were striking, original, and suggestive.

An entirely different novelist, George MacDonald, was undoubtedly a writer of significance in his day. *Robert Falconer*, *David Elginbrod*, and, in fact, most of the novels by which he gained his name, were significant of a tendency to throw off the shackles of Calvinism, especially in Scotland and among the English Nonconformists, where Calvinism had ruled with an iron sway. To read the same books to-day is to find them, as stories, as interesting as ever, but wholly lacking in significance to the present

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generation. The case of Froude's *Nemesis* is still more striking. For writing and publishing that book, Froude lost his Fellowship at Oxford and the work was publicly burnt, after the crude manner of that generation. Because of the significance of the book, the manner of destroying it was futile. It expressed a tendency of thought and accomplished its work, although religious people spoke of it in whispers. To-day Froude's book reads almost *jéjune*. It has neither significance nor importance for a modern reader.

Essays and Reviews was a significant book because it expressed the tendency of religious thought known as the Tractarian Movement, which eventually led to the secession of Newman and the threatened disruption of the Church of England. That book is, however, still significant, for the reason that the conflict between Protestantism and the Church of Rome is still going on, and has hardly changed in its form. On the other hand, *Newman's Apologia*, which was tremendously significant in its day, is to-day only of importance as a literary masterpiece, and a veiled presentment of a very subtle psychology.

Coming to poetry, one might say that Tennyson was much more significant than Browning, al-

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though Browning was intellectually much more important. Tennyson expressed the respectability of art and morals and intellect of the Victorian era. His generation valued him probably because of his limitations. To us he is only significant in historical retrospect. Browning, on the other hand inhabited no "park of morals," acknowledged no confinements, loved the zest of fighting rather than the calm which less original men covet. To-day Browning is still a writer of first-class significance, capable of making new heavens and a new earth for an awakening spirit.

And now a glance at a few more recent and less important examples. Within the last twenty-five years almost every book that has had during that time what is, Americanly, called a "boom" has been of some significance, and often of some importance. *Called Back*, for example ; *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* ; *Looking Backward*—they had no importance as literature, but each of them dealt with something that was interesting the public mind at the moment. Similarly, *In His Steps*—which sold, I believe, to the extent of 5,000,000 copies, and was the subject of leading articles in practically every newspaper in England—was a highly significant book, expressing as it did the vague groping after some practical form

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of applied Christianity that was moving men's minds fifteen years ago or so. To-day, *In His Steps* can hardly be called significant or important.

My last example takes me back to a book of the same order as *In His Steps*, but much more ambitious, published, I think, in the early 'eighties—*Robert Elsmere*, by Mrs. Humphry Ward. Probably no book, after *Essays and Reviews*, ever made the same stir in religious intellectual circles—if the phrase is permissible—as that book which attempted to substitute the human Jesus in the Church for the Mystical divine Christ. The significance of *Robert Elsmere* has faded; the book has no modern importance, or hardly any, and if it survives, does so only because of the sincerity of its intenseness.

XVI

THE Rev. R. J. Campbell's new book *A Spiritual Pilgrimage* deserves notice as a piece of writing altogether apart from any question of its subject. God has perhaps withheld from Mr. Campbell some valuable qualities, but He has given him a singularly attractive gift of speech, and the story of the popular preacher's religious adventures, which is here set forth, owes its chief interest to the personal style in which it is written. No doubt the style is the result of the form of the book. It is an *Apologia*—a personal defence and vindication—and Mr. Campbell's whole record is that of an interesting personality who is at his best when he is most confident about himself. It is of no small help to a writer or preacher to know that he is interesting not only to himself but to others. *A Spiritual Pilgrimage* has in it the note of one who believes that his spiritual story will be of interest to the whole religious world.

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This self-conscious *naïveté* is explained by the story of his early years. He was a very delicate child and his most impressionable years were spent in the care of his grandparents in Ireland. Picturesque, gifted and sensitive as a man, one can picture him as a child and the place he would have in his grandfather's country Irish household. No doubt he was the young oracle of the family. The marvel is that the boy did not become a prig, since as we are told the children of the "cotter tenants" on his uncle's "not very large estate" were "allowed to play with me and expected to defer to my wishes." Mr. Campbell modestly says "the only ascendancy I ever possessed over them was that of superior knowledge and a more active imagination." No doubt,

"And still the wonder grew,

That one small head should carry all he knew."

This consciousness of superior knowledge has been a conspicuous element in Mr. Campbell's whole public life. "*I will tell you*" is a phrase that lingers in my mind of the only sermon I ever heard him preach. It struck me then as significant; it is more significant since I have read this book.

One cannot, of course, fail to recall Newman's *Apologia* when reading Mr. Campbell's *Pilgrimage*,

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and here one strikes the real defect of the later book. Newman's famous vindication was the outcome of intense feeling, great distress of experience, and profound conviction. The restraint of the style only emphasizes the passion which underlies it. That is what makes it an undying piece of literature. *A Spiritual Pilgrimage*, on the other hand, has not the trace of passion, of distress, of unshakable conviction, such as is associated with the word "pilgrim." "I'm a pilgrim and a stranger, rough and thorny is the road," could hardly be sung by Mr. Campbell. His book is picturesquely but wrongly named. It is an interesting record of religious peripatetics, but it is in no sense the story of a pilgrimage.

The author has had a varied experience. His grandparents were Presbyterian, and his father was and is still a minister of the United Methodists. Mr. Campbell was confirmed in the Church of England as a youth, not as the outcome of conviction apparently, but only that he might be qualified to take a position as junior master in a Church school. In fact, he says quite frankly : "I did so without, I am afraid, a really adequate knowledge of how much was involved." It was a characteristic beginning of the "pilgrimage," in the course of which he left the Church of

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England to become a Congregational minister. While in that position he has "tasted" all kinds of religious experiences, and made friendships with notable Church dignitaries—Church of England and Roman—in England and on the Continent. And now at the age of fifty he finds himself a "priest" of the Established Church.

No doubt there will be other changes. The peripatetics are not yet finished, and will not be, as long as new books are published which will make an impression upon Mr. Campbell's charming but fatally receptive mind. At the present moment he is resting among ritualistic Churchmen with much content. But the *wanderlust* will no doubt take him again, and another change will be the result.

His story is all very interesting as a story of the wanderings of an ingenuous mind, but it has no significance. No stream of converts will follow Mr. Campbell to the "Altar," which, he says, is what he always "missed most" in Nonconformity. He is very charitable to Nonconformity and his old friends who remain in it, but he is deeply conscious of the lack of reverence in their places of worship. That he should notice such a matter is also of some significance which needs no emphasizing. I am no

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apologist for Nonconformity, but I cannot help remembering that Robert Browning found an Independent chapel reverent enough. And the most reverent place I ever was in was a Friends' meeting-house. But one remembers that Mr. Campbell "missed most" the "Altar" in his twenty years of dissent, and one understands.

Mr. Campbell will always be interesting as a personality, to himself, and to other people; and he has attractions of character which to the end probably will attract the popular mind. As a Nonconformist minister he exercised great influence of a highly spiritual kind, and there is no reason why as a priest of the Church of England he should not carry on this work. But he has not the main qualification for leadership—steadfastness. His followers of to-day who under his influence leave all and go with him will inevitably find themselves left solitary to-morrow, unless they also are prepared to move on.

This is no harsh judgment. Mr. Campbell says that *The Mystical Element of Religion*, by Baron von Hügel, was the most important influence that entered his religious life in the year or two preceding his withdrawal from Nonconformity. This from a man of fifty,

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who was even then say forty-seven, is very interesting ; and it settles the question of his place as a religious leader. The man who has not found his place in the world before he is forty-five, may be gifted and attractive and useful, but he is no leader. And the names of clergymen which Mr. Campbell quotes oftenest like "My friend James Adderley," "My friend Robert Hugh Benson," and so on, are, in this connection, of significance also.

So one need not speculate on the future of Mr. Campbell as a leader. He has been used to a background, and the limelight on his solitary figure for many years ; and now he has gone to a sphere where personality is of less importance than the Church. It may have a profound effect on his own life. It is of no moment to any one else.

XVII

I.

BY an accident I was last week thrown into almost constant relations with a man whom I have known after a fashion for years, but never in the intimacy of private friendship. He was unable to move, but the illness did not affect his mental energy, and out of courtesy I had to spend a great part of every day in conversation with him. As a consequence, it was a week practically without reading. It was not, however, an entirely fruitless time. I learned a good deal about my guest, and in his light, something about myself which was disturbing, but may, I hope, be salutary. I also had occasion to test some old views of literature and manners, and found them unchanged with time, and even confirmed; and, by much forced talking, I by chance once or twice tumbled into a by-path of ideas in which I saw things, which, if they were not new, had at least a new aspect.

It has been said that "no two men can have

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satisfactory relations unless they hold certain *ultima* of belief not to be disturbed in ordinary conversation." This assured, individuality will merely give that piquancy without which friendships are apt to grow stale. It is one of those aphorisms which the mind accepts at once as true, even without the test of experience, but I never realized how true it was until last week. For years I had met this man at long intervals in more or less business interviews, and had not discovered our fundamental antagonism. But in the first long day spent in his company I knew that friendship in the real sense of the term was impossible, because we had no common ground in which conversation could flourish and friendship grow. True, we talked much, but it was not conversation: it was argument all the time; violent on his side, vexed on mine. The most commonplace—to me—of thoughts, expressed, perhaps sadly, but without conscious challenge, roused opposition. At the end of a week I was a tired man. I wish I could say as much of my friend.

I hope I have not lived my years without learning some urbanity, but it was not till last week that I learned how necessary it is in life, and how dreadful it would be if the quality of mind and

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manners connoted by this term, so much loved by Matthew Arnold, were to disappear from the world. I believe that urbanity is a welcome addition to literature, but it is not its soul, and you can have literature in which no trace of urbanity appears ; you can, in fact, have ideas. True without urbanity literature loses much of charm, but, even so, it can be endured. In life, however, urbanity is essential. Last week it seemed to me that without urbanity life would be impossible ; that in a world of violent controversy there would be nothing left but to die ; that urbanity is an essential of life.

Another conclusion I came to was that urbanity among intellectual people must be connected with some degree of modernness. My friend—a man very familiar with modern languages, knowing something of music and art, and with a professed interest in literature—has no patience with modern artists or authors. In philosophy or ideas, he says truculently that there has been nothing new since Plato, and that modern writers can only serve up in poor language the thoughts that he expressed magnificently.

Aristotle did not come into our conversation ; but he thought small beer of Lucretius, of whom, however, he manifestly knew very little. In

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17. art, Michael Angelo, Raphael, and three or four others made up his Pantheon. All others were to him minor divinities ; most of the moderns were utterly contemptible. In English literature, however, he thought Scott supreme and Tennyson fair. But Stevenson he had no use for. As for your W. N. Davies, Francis Thompsons, Rupert Brookes and the rest of the new men —away with them.

This man has a very definite philosophy. It is constructed entirely on the beautiful in art, and with his reactionary views it is only natural one should discover it to be a dead thing. Urbanity, then, I take to be a quality which requires some sympathetic intercourse and understanding of your generation. It is a question whether your true reactionary propagandist can ever be urbane.

It has since occurred to me that violence of statement and reaction of an aggressive kind must go together. Reactionaries can adduce no reasoned argument that will be accepted by people who believe in progress, and so they fall back on mere dogmatic statement. It may be possible to be dogmatic in an urbane way, but it must be very difficult. In fact, dogma (δογματικός) implies a certain rudeness ; an arrogant, over-bearing

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statement that is distressing to the "sweet reasonableness" on which Arnold laid so much stress.

There is no cure for dogmatism so effectual as wide reading, as there is no surer way of acquiring urbanity of style, than by an extensive acquaintance with the different styles of the best authors. It would seem then that a reactionary taste, in literature at least, is simply the proof of a non-progressive mind. One can judge of the influence of a mind that has stopped growing, by the effect it has on an eager, receptive intelligence. It cheapens all things at once, makes everything seem poor—a sure indication that it is a body of death. Emerson says as finely as acutely, "Every promise of the soul has innumerable fulfilments, and each of its joys ripens into a new want." Reaction knows no new wants, and its old "promises" bring the depression of rottenness.

Looking back, I find, then, that while my week of argument brought a sense of cheapness, as of one who had been told that the treasures which he had gathered in a lifetime were worthless, the feeling was only temporary. I know now, that mere learning will not save a man from spiritual death, and that if I would live the years that

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may be my portion with some degree of pleasure, I must, in literature and in life, seek intercourse with progressive minds. When a man finds nothing new to learn, no new pleasure that he can enjoy, no friend from whom he can get stimulus, it is surely time to die.

II

THEY say there is a time in the process of starvation when the stomach ceases to make the demand for food which at an earlier stage is insistent. The person passes into a condition in which there is no consciousness of hunger. It is not, however, a state of health, and is, in fact, a stage on the way to complete dissolution. One is inclined to say it is the same with all forms of extreme conservatism. In its extremest form, conservatism leads to death of one kind or another. One deduces from this, naturally, that in the sphere of the mind, as in the purely physical sphere, it is possible to die before one's time, purely for want of nourishment.

It is quite possible for a mind that has been well cultivated in youth, to exist for a long period without new ideas such as books bring; just as it is possible for a gardener to turn over virgin soil for several seasons with excellent

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results without the help of any enriching addition. But the process cannot go on indefinitely; and when you cease to put into the earth substances that will enrich it and cause new growth, there will be little or no harvest for garden or field. — It is a commonplace to compare the mind to soil, but the figure is apt and true.

Keeping, then, to this figure, one may say that one of the sure ways to prevent the mind from stagnating, is to occupy oneself with new ideas, to make new friends, whose views are different from our own, to read new books, to take up new interests. It is astonishing how many people live, apparently comfortably, on no richer subsistence than the associations of childhood, the friends of early years, the favourite books that they knew thoroughly when their intellects were just awakened, the political views which they imbibed in adolescence.

Although, happily for themselves, this state of mind is not an uncomfortable one, it is death nevertheless. It is only people of a different nature coming in contact with such minds who are put to distress. One sees how easy it is to cease to grow, and how unconsciously the process of stagnation proceeds. Many an eager young intelligence of great promise has been stopped

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simply by trying to live on one or two books. I knew one man, a relative of my own, who in ordinary conversation, gave one the impression of being highly intelligent. He had a fair number of books in a comfortable home, among which were included some standard works. It was only when you got into conversation in the region of ideas that you came up against the dead part of his intelligence. Somehow or other the conversation was sure to take a turn at which it seemed quite natural for him to say, "Ah! did you ever read *Ecce Homo*?" and then he would go to his solitary, glass enclosed, bookcase and take down that famous work and read some passages which you had heard a dozen times before.

Another friend comes back to my mind, with whom I became rather intimate over twenty years ago. He was older than I by several years, and had in his rooms perhaps about two thousand books, a collection of years, which I looked upon with much respect. It was a well-selected little library, and had many books of which I envied him the possession, for he was well off and able to indulge his fancy. As I then judged, he had a good order of mind, and I hoped much from friendship with him.

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My first disappointment was in discovering that two-thirds of his books had never been read. The fatal nature of his case was not, however, made known to me until I found that in almost every conversation of a literary kind, he invariably took down the same books and read the same passages, quite unconscious that he had read them to me many times before. That is a recollection of many years ago, but when I last met him in his rooms the conversation eventually took the old turn, and the same books were mentioned. True, his library was larger, but none of the new books bore trace of having been read; the untrimmed ones had only the first few pages cut.

So far as books are concerned, the mere collection of a library will not keep the mind in a progressive state. That is why one discourages the book-collecting habit, which is in many cases a weakness and a cause of mental stagnation. On the other hand, without new books it is impossible to keep growing in new ideas. Up to a given time one may subsist on the mental growth that results from the well-cultivated soil of youth. There inevitably, however, comes a time when that gives out; new ideas will not grow without the stimulus of fresh material,

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and if the cure is not introduced there is arrest and sometimes complete mental atrophy.

I don't know a class of men who are more interesting than journalists, no matter how old they are, and the explanation I take to be this. The journalist, by the exigencies of his profession, must daily come in contact with new people, or new ideas, or new books—sometimes all three. The result is, as a rule, intense mental activity. It is true that some journalists are sometimes very shallow, but the best of them are alive at every point. When a journalist is unreceptive to new ideas, unfamiliar with new men in politics and social life, and ignorant of modern books, his day as a journalist is ended.

I must sum up in this last paragraph the means by which the mind may be kept growing. The first is to remember that, however careful the education may have been in youth, one who lives even to middle age will find the original equipment insufficient for his intellectual sustenance. I believe the camel can live on his hump for a certain number of days, but the camel has not yet been born who can live upon it always. As a fact, our original education should be used as a store from which to draw as occasion requires. Our daily subsistence should come

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from new sources. The real danger comes from believing that you have learned all that is worth while, that no new friend of any value can be discovered, that the views you adopted at twenty-five or thirty were for you the end of all wisdom.

One can avoid this only by humility and expectation. Humility of mind will believe that wisdom may occasionally be found in new teachers ; expectation will keep us continually on the lookout for them. I confess, if one may be personal, that, hardened reader as I am, I never open a fresh manuscript or a new book without a feeling that I am on a great adventure. It is my wish that I might have the same feeling about people, and other interests in life, but I confess my limitations here. Nevertheless, even in these relations, I make no weak surrender to the natural desire to stagnate. The result is an interest in the world and its affairs, which if it is not what it should be is still sufficiently active to make me at times feel that I am almost that most disturbing of human beings—a Radical.

XVIII

THE war has led to an extraordinary increase in poetry, and something like four hundred small volumes have actually been published in two years. A friend wrote lately asking if I could account for this. I found no difficulty in answering him.

War and poetry are natural and sequential allies. If poetry did not follow the declaration of war in any country, the conclusion might safely be formed that the war had not the sympathy of the people behind it. My memory goes back to the Boer War, and I cannot remember any "war poetry" during that period of any importance or significance. Poetry in truth was not a feature of the Boer War, and I attribute it to the fact that a very large number of people in the British Empire were utterly opposed to that sad adventure.

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The immediate effect of a popular war is to stir up all the romantic element that has slumbered in life unsuspected during years of peace. To the youth, trade and the making of money become irksome and contemptible in face of the great romance which war offers. Foreign lands, strange peoples and tongues, the panoply of war, the daring deeds to be done and their rewards—it is these things that the young man sees. The streets of his town suddenly put on a martial appearance; drums beat to the tramp of regiments, and bugles sound at night when he lies down to rest, and in the morning awake him from his sleep.

It only requires a poet to make these feelings vocal in fitting lines, to make word-pictures for the youth's imagination, and immediately he must be off to join up, to be a participator in the adventure which he has seen in his mind's eye, and which the poet has put in fascinating pictures. There is no doubt that in popular wars the poet has played an important part in the matter of recruiting. Three years ago and for many months of the Great War, daily newspapers had patriotic poems almost every day. Many of them were written by women, and there was abundance of evidence to prove that they gave an enor-

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mous stimulus to the recruiting of the first year.

So far I have touched only on the expression of ephemeral poetry in time of war, and its uses. In a long war, however, there comes a time when those ardent appeals of the first days no longer stir the generous emotions of youth to which they are addressed. In fact, after a certain time, even when there is no question of the nation giving up the struggle, war itself becomes a matter of business, of every day, of the accustomed, of routine—elements, none of them, that conduce to poetry. That is undoubtedly the dangerous time for every nation.

Fortunately the danger is counteracted by the new kind of poetry that begins to be born. It is most notable that in place of appearing in the daily papers, which are addressed to the multitude, it is to be found in the weekly reviews, in the best magazines, in little volumes published separately. These things in themselves mean that the later war poetry is on a higher intellectual and literary level than the poetry of the blatant months. It is based upon real principles, of patriotism, of idealism, of liberty, of humanity, of the "day of God." Poetry of this kind, appearing after a year or years of war's

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realities—its bloodshed—and losses, supplies the justification, without which there is apt to be war weariness and a national loss of self-love. I believe the popularity of many books of poetry published during the war is due largely to this element of justification which the poets have found for us in the awful struggle.

Poetry has, I think, done more in this war to keep up the national courage and *amour propre* than religion. In fact, it has been my constant secret belief, that if the Churches have really viewed this as a justifiable war, they have neglected at once a fine opportunity and a most urgent duty. I know of men and women who, on depressing Sundays, have gone into great churches in London, hoping to hear a word of inspiration, and over months have never heard anything but the dreariest of platitudes, without reference to the great European tragedy.

War also, in its later stages, inevitably gives rise to inquiries into immortality and the life beyond. The highest type of poets do not as a rule, except for occasional suggestion, deal with the old evangelical view of the life beyond, but immortality or some continuation of existence is at the back of all true poetry. In fact, it is doubtful if any great poet except Lucretius, has

What in the
world do you
think the Church
is for?

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been a true materialist: Even he had a favourite figure, *flammantia mœnia mundi*, which is at a suggestion of something beyond.

The thought of so many tens of thousands of beautiful young lives being suddenly extinguished, not by natural processes, but by the arbitrary method of war, must always raise the question whether the *animus* that each represented has really been extinguished, and whether the thousands of young men who have given themselves up so freely for their country and an idea, have not gone to enrich another sphere which exercises a daily and overwhelming influence upon the world and living men. "Ah," said an old lady the other day to me, who bears one of the best-known names in England, "I suppose our dead boys are half a million or more. A number so large gone into another world must have a great influence on the future of England." That is the kind of idea which breeds the finest poetry.

The poetry of this war has one marked distinction from that which resulted from our previous conflicts. In other days and other wars, poets have written the poems that have sent the youth out to the great adventure, and glorified his death or return. In this

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war the poets themselves have gone to the war, singing as they went; singing, some of them, practically as they died. They wrote in face of such realities as mind of man has never before conceived of. That is why I believe a great many of the war poems will survive. The world will want to hear those swan songs.

*Is that all
you would call
them?*

XIX

ONE of the things that never cease to surprise me, is the number of people one comes across, of fair intelligence, sometimes even of high intelligence, who go through life without a definite view of life. The people I speak of change their views according to the state of their health, their fortune, or the news in the papers. One can see that something can be said for an existence of this kind. There is, at least, variety and small fear of growing into grooves ; and the excitement of altering one's outlook every day may be as pleasant a sensation as gambling, before ruin has overtaken the player. For me, I should find life too wearing on these terms. I want more quiet in my mind, than is possible to those who have no definite philosophy, but are at the mercy of every piece of news for their happiness or despair.

Leaving aside the question of personal comfort,

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however, this absence of a basic view of life accounts for the fact that so many people of great promise seem to make no progress. One can see how it happens. Nothing is believed definitely enough, eagerly enough, to give the impetus and the driving force without which there is no progress achieved. New views are adopted, but always superficially; they have no security of tenure, but are liable to be turned out of house and home to make place for a newer comer. The mind is made an inn, where no guest stops longer than a night, and, having paid his way, departs without a thought of regret for himself or for his host.

The absence of a philosophy of life is often not discovered until a man has fallen upon evil days. In prosperity and good health, variety of friends, of views, adds a piquancy to existence; is, as it were, the champagne of life. There is no desire to understand the origin of life and its end. Sufficient to youth that it is good and that it offers infinite variety. And this view is practically adopted by many people long after youth is behind them. So long as health and prosperity follow a man, he accommodates himself easily and unconsciously to the restrictions of the various stages of existence. In middle-age he, with diffi-

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culty can persuade himself that he is not the youth he was twenty years earlier. He feels as strong, he will tell you, and as keen on enjoyment as ever he was, and, no doubt, he is right. But not many of us get the chance to go through life with unruffled prosperity. Many people, indeed, who reach middle life are quite prepared to debate the point whether the pain of life does not surpass the pleasure. Generally, however, this is a view held by people who have been dependent upon the events of each day. A man with a basic view of life can always put up a good brief for life with all its sorrows.

Probably there never was a time in the world's history when there was more shifting of beliefs—opinions rather—than in these days. Reading newspapers with some degree of care—all sorts of papers—I am struck chiefly by this, that our chief public statesmen, editors, and writers, have in these last two years, been blown about with every variation of the war barometer. In a general state of this kind, it becomes easy to pick out the exceptions; the newspaper writers, the statesmen, who have kept a steady view in our most difficult hours. On looking back one knows how much one owes to those men. One realizes, too, that their clear, steady shining is the result,

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could only be the result, of a very definite view of life, and the place of Great Britain and her Allies in their struggle against Germany's blighting dream of world conquest.

I confess without some such basic view it would have been difficult to have lived through these last two years. In such a time, without a philosophy, one's very recreations are apt to fail one. To enjoy anything there must be some measure of peace in the mind, and many people who generally have found relief from trouble in books have found them fail in the present distress. The people who have taken their views at second-hand have indeed been in a bad case during this war. At first, we were all optimists, and our statesmen and editors more than others. The trials of the first year played havoc with these superficial optimists. One after another they were knocked over, until in the beginning of the second year of war, our chief optimists had become our chief pessimists, at the very time when the average man most needed support. Lately we were all optimists again, because Russia looked like business, the "big push" had started, and Rumania had come into the mill. It was all very gratifying, of course; but was the fate of the British Empire and the cause of the Allies ever really dependent

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upon adventitious events? Is there not something in the attitude of France to make us ashamed? France is *explicitly* keeping her eye and placing her faith on the justice and righteousness of the Allies' cause, rather than upon their guns and shells and poison gases; while we have ignored the moral force.

My own view of the war is very simple and very definite. Every student of history, irrespective of his religious faith, agrees that a certain moral order runs through the history of the world. Germany could not impose her rule on the world without falsifying that moral order, and to have done so would have been an event of hardly secondary importance to the beginning of Christianity. The German organization of forty years has given her a material strength which will take great strength and endurance to overthrow, but be the end soon or long the result is certain. It will be the defeat of Germany, and the deciding factor will be the unreckoned moral force.

That was my view two years ago; it is my view to-day. It has enabled me to get along with my duties in these days that without it would have become intolerable. True, like other and wiser men, I hoped the war would have now been almost

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over. It is not; but however the fortunes of every day may vary, my view of life will preserve me from the distracting thought that material weapons will decide the question of final victory in this stupendous struggle for the freedom of the world and spiritual ideals.

XX

IT is only ten years since the paper-covered volume of verse, entitled *The Soul's Destroyer*, appeared—published by the author himself from a lodging-house in Blackfriars Road, I think—and made known to lovers of literature, that a new singer of uncommon natural genius had appeared among us. Mr. Davies was, in fact, the first-fruits, in a literary sense, of the new century. The poet was, no doubt, fortunate in the time of his appearance, in his circumstances, and in the manner of his publishing. All these helped to win for his first book an attention that slim volumes of poems by unknown writers do not always secure. But none of these adventitious circumstances could have won for him the place that ten years later he holds—a place at the very top of modern poets, and the assurance that posterity will find him among the immortals. He has published seven additional volumes of

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verse in those years, and with every one his poetical genius has shown development, and his technique has bettered, until he has become a finished literary artist. And all this, while conserving the simplicity of form and the spontaneity which were his first chief distinctions.

The publication of *Collected Poems* is perhaps an indication that Mr. Davies considers his work done, and is content to rest on the achievement of the last decade for his permanent literary fame. If this represents his view, it shows a native shrewdness as well as a sound literary judgment. The best poetry of the world has been written in the full flush of youth. At forty, a poet who has been writing for twenty years has rarely anything really new to give. Thereafter poets who live long go on producing verse because it has become a habit, because of a public demand, because of vanity, because of the need of money. But they seldom add to the work by which they will secure immortality. Nothing is more depressing than to glance through "standard poets'" collected editions. In almost every case the immortal part could be put in a volume of 100 pages. And the 500 page "collected" poems—often more—of Standard Poets which publishers persist in giving to the public, is an

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accumulation of commonplace in which one has to search for the gems.

But Mr. Davies's *Collected Poems* is a greater achievement of literary restraint than the title would lead one to expect. It is really only a selection from his ten years' work "of what I believe to be my best pieces"—to use his own words—and he has limited his selection to one hundred and eleven "pieces." If this is modesty, it is characteristically engaging; if it is a pose, it is perfect; if it is shrewdness, it is to be highly commended. A witty American writer has said it is easier to climb Parnassus with one book, than with a library on your back, and Mr. Davies is content with a very modest volume. The result is a book in which the exiguity of the collection is the only thing to grumble at. Mr. Davies might have been less modest with perfect secureness, and with advantage to his readers. I do not recollect a single poem in all the series of seven volumes which has not given me exquisite pleasure, not once, but often.

This said, one gladly pays tribute to the sound, self-critical quality which the selection displays. I believe no lover of poetry, no one of literary instinct, would deny that here is the fine gold

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of literature almost without alloy, and absolutely without base admixture. From "Thunderstorms," a descriptive poem in ten lines which begins the volume, to the narrative poem "The Child and the Mariner" at the end, there is not a "piece" without the distinction of genius, original, constant, unselfconscious. Take "Thunderstorms" :

"My mind has thunderstorms
That brood for heavy hours ;
Until they rain me words,
My thoughts are drooping flowers
And sulking, silent birds.

"Yet come, dark thunderstorms,
And brood your heavy hours ;
For when you rain me words,
My thoughts are dancing flowers
And joyful singing birds."

There is no living poet, there has been no modern poet, who has put as much description and emotion into ten lines. Yet the poem is no skeleton ; it has full roundness of perfection, and the result is an unforgettable figure of beauty and suggestion.

My particular taste finds most pleasure in the descriptive poems, and those included here represent the very finest of this kind of poetry. It is different from the sensuous, rich descriptions of Tennyson, the elaborate tapes-

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try work of Browning, the ornate splendour of Francis Thompson. Davies's descriptive work is jewelled also, but it is the jewel of the dewdrop in a setting of fresh grass, the sparkling of a brook running in the sunshine.

"I hear leaves drinking rain :
I hear rich leaves on top
Giving the poor beneath
Drop after drop.
'Tis a sweet noise to hear
These green leaves drinking near."

No poem in the volume is a stranger to me, and to my joy I find most of my favourite pieces. Thus "Leisure" is one that is among my chief favourites because it contains the implicit philosophy by which Mr. Davies has lived and worked, and is a scornful repudiation of the false values of the world :

"What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare,
* * * * *
No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars like stars at night.
* * * * *
A poor life this, if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare."

"Happy Wind" has ten short lines, and two of them make me laugh with sheer pleasure :

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“ Oh happy wind, how sweet
Thy life must be !
The great proud fields of gold
Run after thee.”

What poet would not be proud to have written the two lines I have italicized ? Is there another living man who could have put the beauty and abandon of wind blowing over an autumn field in those ten lines ? Another old favourite is “ Joy ” :

“ Now Joy is born of parents poor,
And pleasure of our richer kind,
Though pleasure’s free, she cannot sing
As sweet a song as Joy confined.”

And this is no pose. From beginning to end of this book you find internal evidence that the writer has lived in the beautiful poverty of Nature, with great content.

He has seen cities, too, however, and their ugly side in lodging-houses and on the Embankment, and his heart is always with the overpressed ; the workmen sleeping in the cars, “ like lighted coffins in the dark,” that bear them to their work in the early morning ; the outcast in whom he sees not the degradation but only the pitiful fellow mortal.

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He escapes the depression of such sights by letting his mind go on a voyage :

“ So when I’m passing Charing Cross,
Where porters work both night and day,
I oftentimes hear sweet Malpas Brook
That flows thrice fifty miles away.

“ And when I’m passing near St. Paul’s
I see beyond the dome and crowd,
Twm Barlum, that green pap in Gwent,
With its dark nipple in a cloud.”

In fact, the note of Mr. Davies’s poetry is joy, and it is sincere and instinctive, the outcome of the contented mind of a poor man. He is *laetus sua sorte*, and without preaching he makes us happy too. Not many of our poets have made their readers so free of their company—not even William Morris, Socialist though he was. And *Collected Poems* proves that Davies is secure among greater poets than Morris. I think of two poets, both dead, as I finish my first reading of this rare volume. First of Henley ; how he would have loved Davies. And of Lewis Morris, another Welshman—gentleman, scholar, and all that, socially, Davies is not. How he would have envied him his social disqualifications if only he might have secured that place on Parnassus which himself sought so vainly.

XXI

THE Anglo-American Entente, now being celebrated, the evidence of a better feeling between the two countries, is due not a little to the influence of English literature during the last twenty-five years. Before that period, no matter what the excesses of the Germans might have been, America would not have been found on our side. There are sentimentalists of the "hands across the sea" type, and "blood is thicker than water" traditionalists, who do not like to believe this, but it is true, nevertheless. When President Cleveland sent his famous message, twenty years ago or so, nothing would have been more popular in America than a war against England. For this feeling Americans could hardly be blamed. English authors were, for the most part, responsible. In mid-Victorian days, when Dickens, Matthew Arnold, Thackeray and others went to America, they were received

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with overflowing hospitality, and they repaid it by writing books which gave an "evil report" of the land. Americans were naturally inflamed with indignation with the books which resulted from those lecturing tours of famous English authors. They opened again old wounds which were almost healed. In addition, they were an outrage on hospitality.

It was then that there grew up in Americans a hatred of the English attitude to them, which was partly social and partly intellectual. How deeply that attitude wounded even men of cosmopolitan mind, may be learned from a careful study of Lowell's essay, "On a Certain Condescension of Foreigners" in *My Study Windows*. The essay is by no means ponderous; it gleams with humorous irony, but the serious *motif* is never concealed. No doubt the intellectual "condescension" was even more powerful to wound than the social. The social slight was individual and limited; the intellectual slight, conveyed in a book, was national. It hurt the worse because a book is more or less in touch with the world. Americans felt that the gaucheries and solecisms of their country were held up to the ridicule of the world.

In reality, the "condescension" was the outcome

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of English insularity, and, to that extent, a weakness. It was, on a large scale, an exhibition of the village mind. Yet it hurt, as it hurts a young housewife in the wilds to be visited by a town sister, or other relative, and to have her new home criticized from the town point of view. There was another feeling at the back of the hurt. Americans knew there can be no great nation until a literature is born of its history, and they had an uneasy feeling that Great Britain had an advantage in this respect. Up till then, America had been chiefly dependent upon British authors, and this state of things lasted at least up to the 'eighties. The foreign criticisms and "condescension" made America suddenly awake to the fact that they had no history; and of literature but the first makings.

Some of these first makings were indeed extremely good; a few were quite remarkable, and will inevitably be found in any American literary Valhalla. Edgar Allen Poe and Longfellow in poetry, Emerson in the domain of the philosophical essay, Hawthorne as novelist—to name only these four, is to name American authors who are equal to the best in English literature, distinctively so-called. It was a sneer of Arnold's, I think, that the best American literature of

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that day, which, of course, included the work of those names, was not American but English. It might, perhaps, be partially true of Poe and Longfellow, but Emerson was a typical Yankee, and Hawthorne is, to me, one of the most distinctively American authors that I know ; more distinctive, indeed, than authors of the newer generation. One can understand why. The aim of the modern American writer of genius is to have a world view. Fifty years ago, however, the very consciousness of the "condescension of foreigners" made American writers of note very jealous for their country and deliberately provincial in their outlook.

It is perhaps true to say that literature is largely an outcome of national consciousness, and that there was no American consciousness in the true sense until the American-Spanish war. That broke their isolation from Europe and put them on the path of Imperial power. An immense literary activity was the immediate consequence. The American historical novel, in its finest as well as its saddest examples, was the outcome of that war, and the beginning of a literary activity which has increased every year since.

The most popular British authors have still a large reading public in America, but

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the literary pabulum of the American nation is now contributed mainly by American authors. When one thinks of such names as Edith Wharton, Winston Churchill (the American Winston), W. ~~H.~~ Howells, and William James, in four departments of literature, it is clear that America is no loser by the change. One blank there is at the present moment. America has no great poet, nor has she any modern poets equal to the best of our younger men, some of them dead and some alive—Francis Thompson, John Masefield, W. H. Davies, to name only three. But no doubt the American participation in the great European War will speedily restore the balance. Complete sympathy between English and American literature will mean that the present Entente will blend into a permanent, indissoluble friendship between Great Britain and America.

XXII

LATELY there has come to me a new experience ; an utter disinclination to read books new or old after my day's work is done. Only once in my life do I remember the same disinclination to read ; it was when I was very young and had been working too long and too hard for an examination. Naturally one would think a similar cause—overwork—has brought the old symptoms ; but it is my own belief the cause is more subtle and more interesting. It is in short due to the fact that I changed my London rooms some time ago ; and the *genius loci* that has always followed me in my various changes of abode hitherto, has, for the time being at least—if it were finally I should need to move again—departed, finding something unsympathetic in the atmosphere or surroundings. Looking back, I see that the change synchronized with my removal two months ago.

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The idea is not fanciful, as every student of books knows. Months—it may be years—ago, I wrote about the personality of books ; their sensitiveness in the matter of their surroundings and their companions and their treatment. But my present experience is not to be charged against the books ; it is the absence of the familiar spirit, without which one has a constant sense of loneliness. Now, while solitude is imperative for the student, and productive of his highest exercises of thought or of achievement, a sense of loneliness is fatal. In such a state books do not take you out of yourself. They do not engross the mind, which is filled with loneliness to the exclusion of every other emotion or feeling.

I suppose every distinctive book is read better, gives better results, if read in certain places and under certain circumstances. A remembrance comes to me of a boy of twelve years old rising out of bed and tiptoeing softly downstairs to read a copy of *In Memoriam* in red cloth covers, which some one had brought to the house. The book had attracted his attention. He knew nothing of Tennyson, and was afraid to ask boldly that he might read it ; but it drew him from bed and kept him up till one o'clock, reading, not understanding, but greatly admiring. How many times has

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he read it since ! But never again has he felt so powerfully the unutterable yearning of its invocation, *Strong Son of God, immortal love*. Later, perhaps at fourteen, he came across *The Conduct of Life*, and had his first introduction to one who is "Master"; to this day perennially inspiring. True, Emerson rather chilled him in his first samples ; the real introduction came years later. But to this day the man, who was that small boy, remembers the place of discovering the mouse-coloured cloth-bound book and realizing that somehow it was an event.

His next experience was with a book which is not a masterpiece, and which is, indeed, reckoned merely third-rate historical fiction by learned critics—*The Scottish Chiefs*, by Jane Porter. He read it in his early 'teens one day, walking across a Scottish moor, and sitting on the hillside by "Peden's Well" in one of the most lonely glens of Scotland. And he remembers how that enthralling romance made him a flaming Scottish patriot, determined to have no truck with the Southerner, but to devote his life to restoring the Scottish Crown, making Holyrood once more a Royal residence, and the Parliament House, Edinburgh, an assembly as influential as St. Stephen's—and, in fact, renewing the whole

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outward and visible signs of a really independent Scotland. To-day he is confident that not only his age, but the place—Covenanter haunted where he read that book, had a great deal to do with the surges that swelled in his bosom.

Was it youth only that made the discovery of *Leaves of Grass* such an event one day in his early twenties? Was it not also that he was walking on a cliff with a strong wind blowing about him and before him one of the fairest stretches of country in Scotland? This book of an elemental man, which smacked of unmapped spaces, of virgin prairie, of exhilarating free solitudes—did it not exert its power more strongly because the surroundings were at least not the most depressing signs of civilization and towns, and that the boy, looking up from the book, could see far-off ranges of hills beyond which might stretch the infinite? He knows that in an attic in the purlieus of the Tottenham Court Road, a reader poring over a book may be transported to Arcady, but he will never be able to believe that some realism would not make the journey and delights more convincing and memorable.

And so one might go on calling up memories of books read years ago, and the place and

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circumstances that made the reading the one event in a glorious day. But experiences such as those are among the recollections of every one to whom books have been a passion, and to that extent they are commonplace and hardly worth recalling. In truth, however, I had no intention when I put pencil to paper of wandering down this path at all. My intention was to say something about the genius of place; but I found my thoughts go into the track of reminiscence, grown over in the years, but still well defined, and made more interesting than ever because of the moss and wild growth that were not there when I trod that road originally. So I have given myself an hour's enjoyment, and for that I am in no mind to say I am sorry. But one day I must take up that *genius loci* matter, although as I write, it is in my mind that I shall not do it properly until it—he—returns to share my rooms.

XXIII

I

ONE of the first French books which I read as a boy was Souvestre's *Un Philosophe Sous Les Toits*. The book expressed the philosophy of a man with a simple view of life who, in the midst of the feverish excitements of his day—the rush for pleasure and wealth—had discovered that he could get in the simple life of a poor student, a purer and more lasting satisfaction than was to be had by mixing among the great and the wealthy, and so had deliberately cultivated “a taste for poverty.”

My own experience of literary people has not discovered many writers who cultivated “a taste for poverty.” True, many of them have been poor—poorer than the average working man, at a certain stage in their career; and I have known several literary men who, even in their poverty, were “happy in their lot.” But I am bound

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to say that I never met one who did not look forward to success in a material as well as in a spiritual sense, and who did not welcome some change which altered his lot from poverty to comparative affluence.

It is a fact, however, that in the cases I have known of such changed conditions, the accession of prosperity rarely enhanced the quality of their work or made them more interesting in their personality. This is an oblique way of saying that generally the reverse was the case ; that with affluent circumstances something went out of their lives which they had in abundance as poor men, and this loss affected them both in their literary work and in their private personality. Such men always come to my mind when I read, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter—"

It was my fortune lately to spend three days in the company of a man whose name has become within the last few years one of the most distinguished of modern authors, but who, because of several reasons which need not be named here, and because his work appeals only to purely literary people, is still a poor man in the strict sense of the term. We had much intimate conversation ; of his early years, of his beginnings in literature, of his coming to London, of his "fame," and the

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great people who now cultivate him. To my great surprise and no small satisfaction, I found that my friend was the incarnation of Souvestre's poor philosopher—that this now famous author has deliberately elected to remain a poor man, although he has had opportunities of increasing his income by applying his genius in “popular” ways.

He said nothing about having “a taste for poverty;” and, indeed, I could discover that he had an innocent delight in small comforts which he can now command, that were beyond him a few years ago. But he has learned that to put himself in the way of material success in literature, would interfere with his particular genius and the habits of life that are most favourable to it, and he is not prepared to pay this price. He has been offered the “kingdoms of this world and the glory of them,” and he has refused, because it would involve the loss of something he values more. If he keeps to this view, he must remain a poor man, but he will win an enduring name in literature, and that is his supreme desire.

I think that my friend is fairly safe against being seduced from his choice. For one thing, his success has not come until middle life, when a man of any individuality is likely to have dis-

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one of class. People in a certain class of life are forced to live in circumstances which make three or five hundred pounds a year real poverty, who but for this social pressure would find not only sufficient, but even affluence, in either sum. "Why do you keep a brougham if you can't afford it?" I asked a medical man in a struggling suburban practice twenty years ago. "My dear man, I can't afford *not* to keep it," was his bitter and illuminating reply. There is, however, absolute poverty, as there is absolute wealth. I will not attempt to fix figures for either state, but content myself with saying that I have never qualified for the more influential condition.

Absolute poverty cannot be praised without falseness. The poverty that frightens by looming terrors, that makes cold when the need is for warmth, that makes heat when coolness is panted for, that underfeeds children and makes them a prey to the diseases of crowded slums; the poverty that restricts and restrains the natural joys and amenities of life—there is nothing relative about that; it is poverty absolute, and it is unnatural, ugly, and hateful. I do not believe any refined soul could cultivate a taste for this kind of poverty. If he did, it would almost certainly mean a kind of moral degradation, such as drove

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the poet Ernest Dowson to the lowest eating-houses and drinking-shops of the London Docks in the last years of his life.

There are rare exceptions, however—the most notable modern case being, of course, Francis Thompson. His poverty was so absolute that he sold matches and bootlaces at Charing Cross Station to earn the pittance he needed for his small daily wants, and his bed in a lodging-house. So dire was his poverty that he sometimes slept on the Embankment among other waifs, and sometimes on heaps of refuse in the corners of Covent Garden—a solitary lodger in that silent caravansary. And, since he went back to this life at least once after he had been saved from it, it is clear that he must have found some attraction in the Bohemianism, sordid and miserable as it was. The notable thing is that his genius was not utterly destroyed by the experience. As a fact, the poem that first discovered him was written in pencil on a scrap of paper from such a rubbish-heap as I have described, and *The Hound of Heaven* is clearly the outcome of those days.

Of course, even in a case such as Thompson's, the explanation of genius blazing in the midst of sordid poverty is found in the acceptance of his

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conditions without resentment, and the freedom of action which such acceptance brought. Take the case of the Carlyles in their early days in London. They managed on something just over a hundred and fifty pounds a year, and well under two hundred, while Carlyle was writing books which he never bettered—*Heroes and Hero Worship* and *The French Revolution*. Carlyle, at least, accepted his lot without bitterness; he and his wife took the freedom of social action resulting, and were thus able to make even that small income sufficient.

One of my dear friends—an artist, writing from Scotland—raises the question whether in the case of men of his class it is not better for their work that they should be in fairly comfortable circumstances. The question is easily answered. Of course there are men of artistic gifts who can only do their best in comfortable conditions; and obviously, a painter could not easily produce a masterpiece if his home were a single room in which he lived with his family. And there are men of such fine sensibility, that care must not be allowed to touch them if they are to do any work. I should, however, doubt the genuineness, or at least the worth, of artistic genius that could not put up with plain living for the sake of art. It is,

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I suppose, quite certain that the best artistic work in all mediums has been done in conditions of relative poverty.

It is not difficult to understand. The secret is in renunciation. That is why the choice of poverty—relative—is in itself ennobling. It is an implicit limiting of desires, a restricting of pleasures, and even of needs. It is, in short, giving mind dominion over the body. A good case can be made out for the perfect balance of body and mind, but body is always increasing its claims and trying to get chief place. It easily can, for spirit is sensitive and shrinks from pushing its claims. So, in the perfect balance—if such an ideal condition exists—there is always danger. They have made a wise choice who have made the momentous choice and the great renunciation.

There are reasons why artistic masterpieces have been produced under conditions of poverty, and they have relation to the same thing. In poverty the body is perforce kept under, while the mind is not seldom at its brightest and most creative state. Given this, and add the spur of necessity which even the most exalted of minds must respond to occasionally, and the creation of masterpieces is easily understood. It

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is a truism that with every rise in the social sphere our freedom is restricted and our useless duties multiplied. My friend of the last essay has realized these things, and has made his choice. I think for him it is a wise one. For just "ordinary" people the petition, "Give me neither poverty nor riches," which the King of old uttered, is probably the line of true wisdom.

XXIV

A FEW years ago there was a craze for the "simple life," largely the outcome of a book of that title, written by an American, Pastor Wagner, I think. Probably it was an offshoot of the movement, "Back to the land"; anyway, the craze was for the country as the only place where the simple life could be lived.

It was an amusing and sad mistake. Life can be as complex in the country as in town, and quite as worrying; and the mistake might have been tragic if the movement had been serious. It was not, any more than the fashion of slumming twenty years ago was a proof of a new interest in the poor. And so nothing tragic happened when the "Arcadian" game was finished, and the players returned to town, and the complexities of the life that at heart they love passionately, as they really detest the simple life as it is found in the daily round of those who are forced to live it.

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Yet a vague feeling after something desirable was at the back of the unreal and ridiculous movement. It was content they sought—"sweet content," as the poet puts it; only this most desirable thing cannot be found in any artificially arranged life, even in the country. But it is to be found in a simple view of life, in town and country,

Let it be at once said that a simple life is not more easy for the literary or intellectual person than it is for the man or woman of more ordinary occupations. Probably, indeed, the wife of a literary husband whose work keeps him at home all day would declare that the simple life would be much more easily lived if he went to work and came home at night like other men. But it is easy for all who have learned to limit their ambitions and their needs.

Here we get at the real secret. Life in itself is a simple affair. It is in ambition, and the growth of desires which ambition realized breeds, that complexity of life is fostered, and fret and worry come to birth. There is no simple view, and therefore no "sweet content" for ambitious people. Ambition is in some ways an admirable quality, and if I were a keen business man I should prefer to have as assistants young fellows

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who had lots of ambition. To ambition is due in large measure our modern civilization and what is commonly called progress. But it is not the way of peace.

Freedom is an indispensable adjunct of contentment, and in the life of ambition absolute freedom is impossible. There are so many people who can be "useful" to the ambitious man or woman, who must be paid attention to and deferred to, that liberty is lost. Without liberty there may be many luxuries, many privileges, much power, and great splendour, but "sweet content" in the true meaning of the quaint phrase, never again.

With the loss of liberty a simple view of life becomes impossible. The stages by which people living the ordinary social life lose their liberty, and so their happiness, are almost unnoticed as they are reached, and yet they eventually lead to a condition in which every action is regulated by the next-door neighbours. They have become slaves to fear of "what people will think." Obviously this slavery is not confined to town, or country, or suburb. On the contrary, it is possible to lead a freer life in a large town than in a country village, and in London there is a freedom that is unknown in provincial towns. But no

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change of place will give you liberty unless you are prepared to withstand assaults on it.

In a book of small-farming experiences that I read recently, the author tells of how a lady, whom he had once met socially, looked annoyed when he lifted his hat to her as he was taking some of his produce to market, and drove past without returning his bow. It was his first test. An ordinary man would have succumbed, and lost his liberty by hiring a man to drive his stuff to market. This unusual man did not succumb to snobbery, and so he kept his liberty and ensured his happiness.

The French people are a much simpler people than we are, and they are much more charming because they are really much more happy. I have met a French countess, wife of a General, in a seaside village of France, coming home from market laden with vegetables ; and not only did she show no embarrassment, but stopped and engaged me in the limited conversation which my knowledge of conversational French allowed. In rural France, and to a lesser degree in towns, the life is simpler than in England, and as a consequence snobbery in the forms with which we are familiar is unknown. That is at least my experience.

THE SIMPLE LIFE

The simple view, of course, involves the limiting of pleasures. It is as easy to become a slave to pleasure as to your neighbours, and to have many appetites is to have many masters. People who watch children, have noticed that the children of the rich, who have many toys, are much harder to entertain than the children of the poor, who have only one or two toys—mostly contrived by themselves. In the limiting of pleasures there is more than the saving of money and health—there is inevitably a new discovery of happiness in the few that remain. It is as in the eating of food. To bolt food is to lose its flavour and health too, whereas to chew it, I forget how many times, I was assured with seriousness by a dear friend, was to discover a flavour with every chew.

The simple view is not dependent either on poverty or on the “lowly estate.” American millionaires are said to be of simple habits ; and the most entertaining hour I ever spent was in company with a man who told me of his adventures in New York, and who I afterwards learned was a live lord and representative of one of the oldest peerages in England. William Black says that the late Duke of Clarence met him absolutely man to man, and would have no formalities of title or manners in their intercourse. If one finds

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the simple view more often associated with poor men, it is because the surroundings and duties of the rich make the simple view much more difficult. And a vulgar, rich man *pretending* to the simple view is an offensive sight. Yet it must be admitted that, "sweet content" is more easily found in the lowly estate than in a more exalted place. And that is the only reason why poverty may be glorified when it is chosen.

XXV

BOOKS about books and authors have a perennial fascination for me. It is a weakness, of course, for the liking is characteristic of callow youth or literary amateurishness, and I have passed that stage long ago. No matter ; I have discovered that there are really eminent people who are fond of gossip and personalities and are by no means ashamed of their weakness. One of my dearest friends, greatly distinguished, and the gentlest of men, once confessed to me that he liked to hear men getting a "wiggling."

At the library the other day I picked up *Books and Persons*, by Arnold Bennett, and no doubt it was with an expectation of finding something piquant that I took it home. It turned out to be articles reprinted from *The New Age*, in which they appeared during the years 1908-1911. I did not read them when they appeared serially.

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and so they were quite fresh—the matter as well as the manner.

The articles are individual and outspoken almost to truculency—in fact, some of them *are* truculent. They care not a rap for the literary patter of the day and the popular idols, and even when they are discussing such names as Conrad and W. H. Hudson they make it perfectly clear that these authors are discoveries of the writer and no one else. The odd thing to me, and the disappointment, is that the end of the book finds me interested in no new writer of that period, and with no addition to my views of literary criticism.

I do not like the truculent manner either in life or in literature, and in literary criticism it is an offence of the first magnitude. When it is directed against shy genius it is a crime ; when it is directed against unpretentious mediocrity it is a social solecism. Mr. Bennett makes mincemeat of certain authors and journalists who were bludgeoned in *The Academy* years before, and he does it as if he were the first man to discover that as authors and journalists those men were not fit to live. Similarly with publishers. Publishers have been good game always, but since Mr. Bennett admits they occasionally go into the bankruptcy court, it is obvious that

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the space he devotes to their fur coats, their great houses with the Royal Standard floating from them, twenty gardeners, and the like, is too expansive. William Allingham disposed of publishers in a much neater way. In one of his entries, reporting a conversation, he says, "Talked of publishers, and then of higher things." That is it. There are too many "publishers" in Mr. Bennett's book and not sufficient "higher things." And this brings me to the one thought that the book stirred in my mind in the hour which I gave to it the other night.

Personality, while it is the soul of literature and the salt of life, can destroy literature and make life very unpleasant if it is asserted too obtrusively. Indeed personality in literature is like perfume about a woman; it should be an elusive suggestion, rather than an obtrusive presence. There is nothing profound about this thought. It is but a particular application of a familiar proverb, "*You can have too much of a good thing.*" This book has not the smallest chance of enduring, for several reasons; and chiefly, I think, because there is too much of the bold personality of the author in it. Mr. Bennett is very scornful of Mr. Hall Caine, but that gentleman has merely used his personality

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obtrusively in another manner. At bottom, both men have the same aim in obtruding their personality. The author of *Books and Persons* is hardly the person to read Mr. Caine a lesson in modesty.

Another defect of the book is that it is more about "persons" than "books," and unfortunately, the personalities belong mostly to the third and fourth rate. They belong, in fact, to Fleet Street and not to literature at all. Fleet Street is all very well—in fact, it is for me a most fascinating street of adventure. That is because it is newspaperdom; in modern days it has not had much to do with literature. And the authors who are the subjects of so many pages of Mr. Bennett's scornful criticism are mostly literary journalists.

Here one comes upon the radical defect of *Books and Persons*. The matter was all very well as topical stuff in a newspaper, and the individuality of the style was no doubt a valuable "feature" of the periodical in which it appeared. In short, the articles were good journalism and as such served their day and purpose. Occasionally journalism rises into literature by reason of its subject, or of its style, or both. This volume has no such claim.

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That is not to say there are no striking things in it. When the author says that the defect of Mr. Masefield is that he is always trying to write literature, he is saying something that is probably true. Anyway, the remark is of the nature of essential criticism ; and there are occasional penetrating things in the book which may be discovered by the careful reader. But mainly it is a book of "persons," and to discover how little persons matter to posterity, one has only got to turn to the pages of Hazlitt.

XXVI

A CORRESPONDENT recently sent me MS. poems by his son at the Front, for criticism and advice. I took up the MS. rather hopelessly, for in the matter of poetry nothing but the best is of any value, and a discovery of the best, even in the way of "promise," does not happen very often. In this case I found that I had made the discovery of a genuine poet. There were echoes of greater men, as there must always be in a poet's early work, but they did not drown the clear, individual, and striking note of the author, either in his lyrics or in his blank verse, in both of which forms he had extraordinary facility. I passed my views to his father and gave what advice I could offer.

By return of post came a letter saying that his son, Ernest Denny, Second-Lieutenant, had been killed at the Front the day before. Naturally,

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the news was something of a shock to me, although the young man was an utter stranger, of whose existence I had not known for more than a fortnight. And yet, it only fulfilled a presage that bore upon me when I was reading the poems. If ever the "waft of death," that Mr. Strachey has recently disinterred from the literature about Cromwell, came to me from any MS., it came from these poems of Ernest Denny. If the MS. had been in my hands still, I should have liked to quote some of the lines which made the feeling strong upon me as I read them.

It is a common thing in youth to toy with the idea of early death. It is not always an affectation, but it does not necessarily mean that death is imminent. Many young poets who have written about death have lived to be old men, and no doubt, at that age they were not poets at all. On the other hand, there are some expressions, printed or written, which convey a subtle suggestion to the reader that the writer will not live long. No doubt some people are more sensitive to this kind of thing than others; but this side of it is not so interesting to me as the question whether the writers themselves have actually a premonition of their approaching end.

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I am inclined to think they have, and especially if their speculation about death is of a curious and not of a wistful, melancholy kind.

In the case of Ernest Denny, death was a subject of speculation, of curiosity. It was to him the great adventure, and fittingly, the last. No doubt many of the boys who have died in the War have faced death in the same spirit, but not all of them have had this curiosity and interest—not even those who have speculated about being killed. For example, Rupert Brooke's *If I Should Die Say Only This of Me* does not tell me that he had the same curiosity to explore death, as this at present unknown poet. I think it even likely that Rupert Brooke thought he had a tolerably good chance of coming back.

The subject is worth dwelling on, for undoubtedly, if many of the young men who have fallen faced death in the same way, it puts a new aspect on their early decease. It must, I think, give great comfort to mothers who have lost sons, if they realize that their boys were not afraid of the last adventure, but, although not courting death, were rather thrilled at the thought of what they would discover if it were their lot to fall.

Of course, this compensation can only come

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to those who believe in a future life. To those who believe that death ends all, there can be no compensation for the cutting off of a young life at the very beginning, either for those who die, or for the bereaved who are left behind. The only compensations of the War are to those who take a spiritual view of life. It need not necessarily be what used to be known as an "orthodox" religious view; although even in the last twenty years I have come into relation with people, elderly, of course, who held the most materialistic views of the future life; and I have no doubt that in certain of the smaller sects, among those who are uneducated in books, the same views may still be held.

Among people of a different intellectual class, however, belief in a future life has become more and more spiritualized. It does not necessarily remove all possibility of survival of personality—of recognition, and so on—but gradually it has become content to rest upon the foreshadowing of the future life given by S. Paul: "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." Probably most modern, intelligent readers are content to leave definition at that.

There are, of course, others, those who believe in reincarnation. It is astonishing how largely

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this Eastern conception of the future life has of recent years penetrated Western minds and mixed itself up with the Christian view of immortality. To every speculative mind, however, I daresay the chief thought that comes up when a friend or relative dies is, "Well, you have solved the great mystery."

XXVII

THE publication of the *Life of Theodore Watts-Dunton*, in two volumes, reminds one of the 'nineties and some astonishing literary reputations, which time has failed to justify. They were mostly of young men, poets chiefly ; but there were also new novelists not a few. It is tragic to look back and remember that the exuberant literary criticism of that day spoke of those new writers as second Scott's, and new Milton's and Keats'.

It is tragic, because hardly one of them has survived into the new century, and not one of them has fulfilled the predictions then made as to their future. Among poets Stephen Phillips was the most brilliant, and for a while that unfortunate genius seemed as if he would justify the extraordinary praise bestowed upon his early work. Mr. le Gallienne came a good second, and for a few brief years was one of

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the most picturesque and widely paragraphed literary personalities in London.

Among novelists, the most popular was "Ian MacLaren," of whose first book a well-known critic predicted on its first appearance: "This book is destined to win an immediate, wide, and enduring popularity." To-day Stephen Phillips is dead, after having outlived his reputation for some years; and *The Bonnie Brier Bush* and the other novels by the same author are almost forgotten things.

The period when those writers flourished was one in which the personal literary paragraph was much more in evidence than it is to-day, and much more influential. The critics were, like the authors whom they lauded, young; literature had for the first time been adopted by the daily papers; and before it was discovered that it did not "pay" in daily journalism, it got a prominence that in the halfpenny papers to-day is reserved exclusively for the best news "story."

Everything about the new authors—their appearance, their habits, methods of work, their uprisings and down-sittings—was canvassed. Provincial papers followed the London lead, and the result was fame, and no little popularity,

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for a class of writers who before had been allowed to live and write in obscurity. The fashion was called log-rolling, but it was not all unworthy. As in Elizabethan days, a spirit of expectation was in the air, and a phrase used in publishers' advertisements in the last decade of the century, "New writer," gave a thrill that suggested the rising of a new planet. It was the Indian summer of the dying century, and unquestionably it was a time of literary efflorescence and enthusiasm such as we have not experienced since.

Watts-Dunton came to more than his own in those years. He was not a young man, was, in fact, over sixty, but he emerged from the obscure anonymity of journalism, and private literary fame among a coterie, to a publicity which for a time was rather dazzling. He owed it mainly to one man, a highly influential journalist, of real genius and enthusiasm. This admirer at that time believed that in the pages of the *Athenæum*, the *Examiner*, and other periodicals there was buried the most brilliant literary criticism of the century, unknown simply because the author was afflicted with a foolish shyness that prevented him from collecting his essays and publishing them in book form. The journalist

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had opportunity and influence, and he used them both—freely and royally and insistently, and at last he got his idol in full public view, about '98 or thereby. Little was known of Watts-Dunton's buried treasures, but in the literary "criticism" of the day he was accepted as a great critic; a poet, in performance perhaps next to Swinburne; and a novelist whose masterpiece, unpublished, was among the things that lovers of literature were in duty bound to insist on seeing the light.

There is no reason to believe that Watts-Dunton desired the publicity which his admirers secured for him. If he had been let alone, it is probable that he would have continued to live in the secluded dignity of the "Pines," at Putney, as the faithful friend of Swinburne, the great poet who had won a secure place years before, as one of the bright and permanent stars of English literature.

He was not, however, proof against the insistent call to produce his masterpiece; and at last *Aylwin* appeared before a public that had been well prepared to welcome it as a literary event of the first importance. In its original form it had some success, as was inevitable. No book in my recollection has been more widely

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and enthusiastically noticed. I suppose the praise was sincere enough, although I think much of it came from the pens of literary dogs who barked to direction.

The enthusiasm did not last long, however, and *Aylwin* as a literary topic and book of the day soon passed. Some years later, it had the compliment of being included in the *World's Classics*, and in that shilling form it must have had fair popularity. There were some people, however, who examining the book on its merits, found it an overrated performance, and, in fact, extraordinarily dull. I knew some literary men to whom *Aylwin* was a red rag. For myself, I read half of it with great difficulty, and finally gave up. It seemed to me a fat book in the intellectual sense.

Watts-Dunton's star set with the publication of a volume devoted to his work by an enthusiastic Irish journalist. From beginning to end the book was a pæan of praise. Everything that Watts-Dunton had written was of eighteen-carat quality. He was the greatest critic, one of the greatest poets, and, of course, the greatest novelist of his time, and he had no defects at all. The book was of course a failure, as such a work always is. The extravagance of its praise made it of no critical value, and it

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destroyed an illusion that had lasted a considerable time.

After that, Watts-Dunton's literary glory paled. His name, however, became increasingly respected and admired in connexion with his thirty years' devotion to Swinburne, and when the latter died the whole story of the beautiful friendship was the theme of innumerable articles in the Press.

Theodore Watts-Dunton had conspicuous literary gifts, but even if he had exercised them wisely, it is doubtful if they could have won him permanent literary fame. A man of attractive personality, of quick sympathy and warm impulses, his true genius was for friendship, and he exercised it nobly. It was natural then, that Philip Marston, Rossetti, and Swinburne, whose hearts he had warmed with his own generous flame, should have spoken extravagantly of his literary work, and also natural that he should have come to accept their estimate.

His vanity was ingenuous and harmless ; it was inevitable from his seclusion and the anonymity which, for the greater part of his life, he practised. It is sad to find that his warmest admirers of twenty years ago are now lukewarm. A six-column review of the newly published *Life*, largely devoted to watering down his

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literary pretensions, finishes up thus: "There are many of us who will never forget his friendly accost, the warm grasp of his hand, the brightness of his eyes." I am reminded of a man who had a provoking way of saying, by way of dissent from any argument, "*That is very true as far as it goes, but it doesn't go very far.*"

XXVIII

STOPFORD BROOKE'S death, which occurred recently, made less impression than it would have done if the war had not made every other topic, even the death of a Pope last year, insignificant. But, war apart, his passing could not have left the impression of an irreparable loss as when a great man dies. He never was great ; his literary criticism, by which alone he may live for a generation, was never, at its best, creative in the larger sense. But he was always personal and interesting as a writer, and as a suggestive and stimulating preacher there can be no doubt he exercised a very real influence upon young men thirty years ago.

Talking of Stopford Brooke as a preacher recalls an interesting conversation with a hairdresser in an English seaside town fifteen years ago. I was in company with a novelist who had just

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made a great success, and, the shop being empty, we talked of a book which we had picked up on a bookstall, while one of us was being operated on. After a while, the hairdresser ventured a remark, diffidently but eagerly, and, finding it met with sympathy, he expanded, and said some interesting things about books.

Asked about the cultivation of his literary taste, he said he was brought up in a London workhouse, and had no literary intelligence until, as a youth, he was introduced to the chapel where Stopford Brooke, then a Unitarian minister, held a select congregation of "intellectuals" closely together. Thereafter the lad walked four miles every Sunday to hear him. Under Stopford Brooke's influence he developed a literary taste and acquaintance with most of the great English classics. After this, it was almost a disappointment to learn that the hairdresser, who spoke with a strong Cockney accent, was of Scottish birth.

My own introduction to Stopford Brooke's work was when he was known chiefly as a poet. The friend who lent me his poems gave him a fairly high place among contemporary poets, and as he was a man of great literary cultivation and discernment, and I was very young, I accepted

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his view, and read the book as reverently as I had read Browning, to whom the same friend introduced me. But whereas the first reading of Browning was an event that is unforgettable, even as to time and place, Stopford Brooke's poems made no impression on my mind. To-day I have wholly forgotten them. That is my reason—very personal, no doubt—for believing that Brooke does not count as a poet. As a fact, my recollection is, that after the publication of his study of Tennyson, Stopford Brooke published no more poetry.

There came a time, however, when the poet-preacher became for me a literary man of great importance. That was some time early in the 'nineties, when he published his *Tennyson and His Relation to Modern Life*, a demy octavo volume of considerable proportions. The book arrested at once, and held me to the end of its, I suppose, five hundred pages. Nothing I had read about Tennyson had been so individual, so understanding, so exhaustive, so beautifully written, as this fine study. That is long ago, and one's views have modified on several literary matters; but experience has justified my first judgment of the work, and to-day *Tennyson and His Relation to Modern Life* remains

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the best study of Tennyson that has ever been written. It is years since I looked into it, but that is because I remember it well enough, and more, perhaps, because Tennyson has not the place in my gallery that he had at that time. The book is not to my hand, but I am able to quote one sentence which will show the illuminating quality of Stopford Brooke's criticism. "Tennyson inhabited a park of morals" is a sentence of extraordinary significance.

Two or three years later, Stopford Brooke followed up his Tennyson by a similar study of Browning. I had no great expectations when the book came into my hand, for it seemed incredible that a mind that could understand and interpret Tennyson so utterly, could be as sympathetic with the more virile genius and rugged art of Browning. I was not disappointed. The "Browning" is a pedestrian performance, in which is nothing arresting or illuminating. The place for a study of Browning equal to Stopford Brooke's "Tennyson" still remains open. It should be written by some one with a Carlylean imagination and power of expression. What a book it would be!

When I read later *The Gospel of Joy*, a book of sermons, I knew why the "Browning" had

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been a failure. The sermons gave the preacher's view of life as all sermons do not. There was nothing professional about them. They were personal, sincere, and persuasive. But there was a gentle note that did not, let us say, suggest "I was ever a fighter." It was to me, then, a beautiful, helpful book, with no aggressive Unitarianism in it, and the pleasure it gave me lingers still in my memory. But it made no mark, it left no phrases in my mind, as other books of sermons, read about the same time, by other ministers did.

In my opinion Stopford Brooke will live in his personal influence rather than by his books. In this he would be like another devoted lover of English literature—Professor David Masson, of Edinburgh. Masson failed of being a great author himself, but he had a great enthusiasm for literature, and no one who came under the spell of his lectures could ever again be quite indifferent to books. In all parts of the world there are men living to-day who owe their first enthusiasm and their love of books to David Masson or Stopford Brooke. Who can doubt that they will hand on the Torch?

XXIX

I HAVE just finished reading Mr. Wells' latest book, *God, the Invisible King*, in which is given the views of the "New Believers," a large number of people, steadily increasing, who having discarded Christ and Christianity as outworn, impossible for human belief and even human needs, have found a New God, and with the discovery, a new world in which it is good to live, even in this time of a world war. "Mr. Britling" was one of them, and Mr. Wells is another. Perhaps one ought to say Mr. Wells is one, and there are many others. Anyway, Mr. Wells in this book explicitly states his *credo*, and says it is the belief to which "New Believers" implicitly subscribe.

The great difficulty of stating a creed is like the selecting a hundred best books—everybody can take a hand ; there is no ultimate authority. "Mr. Blank, what is your religion ?" was the

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question once put by a pushful lady to a famous man. "The religion of all sensible men, madam," was the reply. "And, pray, what is that?" was the lady's eager second question. "That, madam is what no sensible man talks about," came the swift reply. I quote this oft-told true story merely to point my foregoing remark; it does not necessarily represent my own standpoint. I can conceive that there may be occasions, apart from church, when it is demanded of a man that he should say, "I believe in——."

It is no compliment to say that, in stating his *credo*, Mr. Wells is a bold man. With a man so self-possessed, so self-centred, so confident, boldness is native, an inevitable expression of his individuality. Mr. Wells's star still burns brightly; if and when he shows any lessening of boldness, its now effectual fires will wane. But Mr. Wells's courage as a New Believer is, even for a religious dissenter, bold "bye or'nar," as Scots peasant people put it.

If he had merely ruled out Christ from his religion, he might have been identified with Unitarians. No; this first of explicit "New Believers" must justify his dissenting sect. A "believer"—just the ordinary kind—might read Mr. Wells's statement of "what God is" as pre-

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senting a Being hardly to be distinguished from the God whom the ordinary believer worships as the Father of Jesus Christ. But the author of *God, the Invisible King*, makes his God quite his own by saying that his God has two Beings—God who is a person, and a “Veiled Being.” He pours scorn upon the famous conference at Nicæa, where the Trinitarian “imposture” was first enunciated ; and against the “ three persons in the Godhead ” belief, he is hostile to truculence. But to the Unitarian who says, “ There is one God,” his reply is quite definite. It is in effect : “ No ; that won’t do for me. I must have two Gods. I must have a Person and I must have a Veiled Being.” And that is where Mr. Wells, as an individual creed-maker, will probably fail, as all his predecessors have failed. For if two Gods, why not a Pantheon ? And meantime why rage about those who need a triune God—“ three in one ”—if you are insistent on two in one for yourself ?

When Mr. Wells defines God, he says many things that the ordinary believer would take as the expression of a man who was simply a liberal but devout christian. For example, “ God never dies, nor disappoints, nor betrays ”—these are the unvarying attributes of God insisted on right

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through the Old Testament. When he says there is "man's love of God" and "there is the love God bears for man as the individual believer," it might be a quotation from a sermon of the godly McCheyne (whom as a boy I never could abide) : and Spurgeon certainly would have said "Amen" to the dictum, "The Spirit of God will not hesitate to send us to torment and bodily death."

Some of his passages might have been taken from the pages of a modern mystic of the intellectual and artistic quality of, say, John Pulsford. I give one beautiful paragraph almost in its entirety :

"God waits for us ; for all of us who have the quality to reach Him He has need of us as we of Him. He desires us, and desires to make Himself known to us. When at last the individual breaks through the limiting darkness to Him, the irradiation of that moment, the smile and soul clasp, is in God as well as in man. He has won us from His enemy. We come staggering through into the golden light of His Kingdom, to fight for his Kingdom henceforth."

There are various personal references which justify the impression that Mr. Wells was brought up in a dissenting household. If this be true, *God, the Invisible King*, is a striking proof of a com-

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monly acknowledged fact, that dissenting faith in its essentials can never be eradicated in one who has spent childhood under its influence. There may be a period of revolt, of separation, of apparent complete apostasy, but only apparently. One day it will clutch the man again by the sublime fact that that is its foundation postulate—a personal, immanent God, “a present help in time of trouble” who now comes to his awakened consciousness stripped of and independent of all subsidiary doctrines.

And the Cross—what of that? Mr. Wells says: “New Believers will never again come under the Cross,” and my only comment is that he has lived long enough to recant more dogmatically expressed statements than that. For the rest, it would not surprise me if one day Mr. Wells were found preaching regularly every Sunday, after the manner of every dissenter with a religion of his own. It may be in Portman Rooms or the Æolian Hall, or it may be in a tin chapel in the New Cut. For to one or other of these missionary breathing places must come every “New Believer” as individual, as passionate, as dominating as the author of *God, the Invisible King*.

XXX

IN the current number of *The Poetry Review* Mr. Stephen Phillips has an interesting article "Is the Poet a Pessimist?" Mr. Phillips adduces many proofs that the answer must be in the affirmative, and the names of great poets whose note has been chiefly sad is striking and suggestive. Naturally Mr. Phillips relies chiefly on the Bible in proof of his contention. "The whole of the poetry of the Old Testament, and there is none greater or truer, is instinct with a profound and brooding melancholy." So far as I can see, optimism in the general understanding of the term, results from a state of mind that is possible only to youth, a limited intelligence, or a detestable kind of smug religion.

There have, of course, been young poets who have written pessimistically—Byron was a notable example. But in cases such as his it has generally been something of a pose, or the pessimism

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that results from the disillusion that follows the pursuit of pleasure. It is unnatural for young people to be pessimists for more than a day or two at a time. And for fairly obvious reasons. Troubles of any kind coming upon youth are forgotten as they pass away; they have no cumulative effect. At a certain age—I do not know when—troubles begin to be cumulative. It is then that pessimism begins, if pessimism be the right word to express a state of mind which is simply one of seriousness in face of the great facts of life.

As to poets being specially addicted to the gloomy view of life, it is only what one would expect from the genius that sees below the surface into the soul of things. There can be no great poetry of the "keep smiling" order. It is significant that there is no *great* poem that can be termed optimistic—I am using the term in the sense in which Mr. Stephen Phillips employs it—and there is no great writer who has written optimistic books after fifty.

But although a man may not be what is termed an optimist, it by no means follows that he is a pessimist. On the contrary, many men who have been forced by experience to give up the unconsidering optimism of youth, have gradually

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acquired a philosophy of steady and contented acceptance of the facts of life. This is a state of mind much to be preferred to "optimism," which is so often, after youth, the evidence of smug self-satisfaction. For myself, I have no more patience with pessimism as an attitude towards life than with optimism. Neither is wholly justified, neither is dignified, and both may be highly dangerous.

XXXI

MISS BRADDON, who died the other day at an advanced age, was probably the last representative of a school of Victorian novelists which flourished a generation ago and divided between them the whole rewards, material and spiritual, of fiction for a great many years. When they were popular, writers like George Meredith were in the wilderness. To-day all our younger novelists are Meredithian, more or less. Probably there are to-day stories running as serials in weekly papers circulating widely, in which the Braddon, Whyte-Melville, Wilkie-Collins tradition is more or less followed, but in practically all modern novels the method has been entirely discarded. Miss Braddon and Mr. Wilkie Collins were the chief representatives of the school of novelists who made elaborate plot the foundation and the *raison d'être* of their stories. Neither style nor characterization was

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of the first importance. Plot was the main thing. In these days our writers have almost discarded plot ; and when it is introduced, it is subordinated to the psychology or characterization. And, as far as I know, a long review is never given to a modern novel in which the plot is the chief interest.

It is interesting to reflect on the changed intellectual taste which this indicates—a taste which is not arbitrary or passing, but the result of a more complex civilization and less simplicity, and probably permanent in the sense that there can be no return to the earlier state. In a way, it is a gain, for it undoubtedly indicates a higher intellectual development. On the other hand, the change represents a loss, because modern fiction cannot be to us what novels were to our parents. The novel of to-day is not a mental sedative, it is a highly charged stimulant. That is merely to repeat what has often been said before, that practically all modern fiction represents an attempt to teach the public. There is a certain class who prefer to take their teaching neat, and they shun novels with a purpose ; but there is another class—a larger one—who get their “intellectual” food and teaching entirely from fiction.

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In my life I have known a number of intellectual men who found recreation in reading sensational fiction in which elaborate plots were the chief feature. Those who are alive are all elderly men now, and I do not know whether their taste is representative of younger men to-day. For myself, I find no pleasure in plot, and the most absorbing detective story interests me hardly at all. Detective stories, by the way, have a fascination for certain minds in every age, and the detective story does not vary much, except that methods have changed with telegraph and telephone communication, the coming of motor-cars, taxis, etc. "Sherlock Holmes" is so rare a phenomenon that he may be left out. Andrew Lang, in his capacity of literary adviser, was always on the look-out for a new Sherlock Holmes. And I saw a letter the other day from a well-known novelist—one of the "big sellers"—to another literary man, full of enthusiasm about a detective story, *Through the Wall*, which had kept him out of bed half of one night. These cases are mentioned as showing that the taste for sensation in fiction is by no means indicative of a poor intelligence.

Miss Braddon's novels—all of them, I believe—while they were not prim by any means, were

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quite safe for what used to be called "family reading," except by the people who in those days discouraged all fiction on religious grounds. The taboo on fiction has long been removed, even by careful parents ; but the novelist for family reading has been gradually disappearing, and with Miss Braddon's passing has probably gone for ever. Children read books of their choice, and parents follow their own bent. Each knows, it may be, what the other has read, and each may wonder what impression certain books have made. The knowledge can only come of the individual will to compare notes. There are no longer novelists whose books are the literary food of whole families. Edna Lyall was probably among the last, and she was too "daring" twenty-five years ago in dealing with religion. We have all individual tastes nowadays.

Remembering "Miss Braddon's" methods in fiction, one finds a study of the work of her two sons highly interesting. In Mr. W. B. Maxwell's first novel, traces of his mother's influence, in method and literary style, were very clear ; but he has gone a long way since, and now there is a wide gulf fixed between mother and son as novelists. Mr. Maxwell has given much offence to many people, even to some who do not take

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the Puritan view of literature. But it is beyond question that he is one of the younger writers—not so very young, either—who take a serious view of fiction as an art, and that he views it as an important, if not the chief method of imparting a view of life.

On the other hand, his brother, Mr. Gerald Maxwell, is a story-teller pure and simple, and appears to bother himself not at all about purpose, philosophical, social, or other. His book, *The Miracle Worker*, to which Andrew Lang drew my attention some years ago as a “clever, most amusing book,” has an opulence of imagination, a sprightliness, and a kind of literary distinctiveness that his brother’s novels lack. Mr. Gerald Maxwell’s novel teaches nothing, yet leaves a definite impression in the memory, which shows that the story is good and that the characterization has some relation to real life. The conclusion I arrive at is that “Miss Braddon,” while her own books will remain merely as representing a period and a stage of popular intellectual development, has some prospect of surviving in the work of her gifted sons.

XXXII

SOME one—Mr. George Bernard Shaw, or a lady lecturing on that clever writer—said a short time ago that a modern fault is the lack of courage to “scrap old ideas as machinery is scrapped,” and instancing as a case in point the plays of Shakespeare, which are now 300 years old. The remark may easily have been Mr. Shaw’s, for he has, without much modesty, more than once suggested that Shakespeare is a false god, and that his own plays are as good as some of them and better than many of Shakespeare’s.

The reference to scrapping is, of course, to the habit of discarding old machinery, warships, and the like, as soon as newer inventions or improved models appear. The policy has been proved economically sound beyond question, and many a man is the poorer because he has shrunk from the enterprise and expense it involves. It requires courage and the ability to take a long

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view. At first it may mean loss, but always it means eventual gain, if not to the man who makes the first experiment, then to those who succeed him, and in this way to the race. To this courage which discards the old in favour of the new we owe the commercial supremacy which was ours for so long, and the naval dictatorship which is only now seriously challenged. The general principle of "scrapping" old-fashioned instruments is therefore sound.

The question arises: Is there any analogy between ideals or literature, and mechanical contrivances, in this very important matter? If there is, then for many generations we have been hideously wrong in our method. We have exalted the classics as living gods, long after their virtue has departed from them, and we have probably neglected to recognize new gods with vital messages for our own time. That a number of modern writers are perfectly willing to supplant the classics is quite true; and some even suggest that they are only hindered from the position which is their due by this foolish belief that the proved teachers are better. One of the compensations of commonplace but ambitious minds, is that they can compare their work with standard authors and be unashamed.

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It need hardly be said that there is no comparison between machinery or any mechanical contrivance, and literature. The one is material and the other is spiritual. The engine or machine may be the outcome of spiritual energy, but, however marvellous may be its mechanism, it is nothing more than dead matter. You may destroy it, or you may scrap it—it is unable to protest or make an appeal; you may leave it neglected on a heap, or may resolve it into its original constituents and fashion a new instrument of the re-made material. It has no voice in the matter of its fate; left alone it has no power to spring into motion or to offer itself to the service of mankind. There are books, indeed, which in a rough-and-ready generalization necessarily come under the category of literature, that are as purely material as any mechanical contrivance, and their fate is the rubbish heap or the pulping mill. They are not literature truly. They flourish for awhile and then perish utterly, because they have never had life enough. It must never be forgotten that while mechanical contrivance is employed in their production, or the matter which composes their body, it is the life in the world's great books that has made them endure.

How could it be otherwise? There are no

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vested interests to serve in guarding the classic literature of the world from destruction, and if there were, they would not have been strong enough to prevent their decay. Indeed, in this indestructible life of literature, there is, in my opinion, no unworthy argument for the persistence of human life. Think for a moment of the books we know as standard works that have taken their place for hundreds and for thousands of years. A man is burrowing among old books on a stall. He picks up one with an unfamiliar name and author, glances into it, and finds that he is being addressed by a living voice. He secures the treasure; he takes it home, reads it; fired by its message he communicates his enthusiasm to others. Their combined influence results in the book being republished. Although the edition may be small, it is sufficient to inspire, say, a thousand persons, and these of the best intellectual quality teachers and writers. There is no further demand perhaps, and so the book seems to die again, but it is only in seeming. One day it will be discovered again, another edition will be given to the world, and so *ad infinitum*.

Or consider another case; a living voice that has been shut up in unpublished manuscript and never had the opportunity of

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expressing itself to its own generation. Short of fire and flood and "act of God," that voice will make itself heard, and deliver its message though hundreds of years may have elapsed. There is the modern instance of Thomas Traherne, the discovery of whose unpublished poems a few years ago by Mr. Bertram Dobell, was the literary sensation of the year. "For considerably more than two centuries," says Mr. Dobell, "they had remained in manuscript, unknown and uncared for. They had fallen into my hands by what I must think was a very remarkable series of accidents." Leaving the matter of accidents out of the question, the point is he discovered them. He was stirred by their message and style, and with great courage he gave them to the world in book form. The discoverer was a comparatively obscure man, a second-hand bookseller in Charing Cross Road, but, by general consent of the best literary authorities of the day, it was admitted that he had discovered a poet whose future will be among the immortals. Since then Mr. Dobell has discovered Traherne's *Centuries of Meditations*, and this work is likely to become a standard one in devotional literature.

The permanent authors are indeed not read by all who buy them, and the numerous libraries

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of reprints and the numbers sold of them give little idea of the extent to which they are read. But if they were not read at all, and merely bought for furniture, standard literature as such would be consigned to oblivion in one generation. But every standard author has his audience, however limited, in every generation. And so publishing of classical authors goes on; the intellectual life of each generation is enriched by the stores of the past, and the evolution of the human race proceeds. There are people foolish enough to believe that any book can be made to go by pushing, and that sometimes books die because they do not get a chance. Some publishers even believe this; but if they express it in any tangible form it is always to their loss. Two or three years ago an enterprising firm announced a new series of reprints entitled *Half-forgotten Books*. So far as I could judge, the series was a failure from the beginning. It certainly never proceeded or made a place. The title, indeed, was its own condemnation. Vital books may interest only a small circle of readers, but they are never "half-forgotten."

And there is the indestructibility of each vital book as a complete thing. In our day there has arisen a class of sharp intelligences,

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who look upon literature purely as a commercial thing. A few years ago one of them conceived the idea that standard books of the world would be more popular if they were cut down, if the gist of their contents were given in a few pages, and an elaborate scheme for a brief series of these "potted books" was launched by a newspaper firm. The scheme was a failure, and for the moment there is no more of this "potted" literature. The result must have surprised its originators, but it did not surprise any one who understood what literature really is and means. To give the gist of a book is as if one were to take a human heart and present it as a living man. A heart could not be so exposed and beat, and a book could not be so contracted and live. For a book is the expression of a personality, and that personality is expressed not only in the thought with which it is charged, but in the literary style, and even in its brevity or prolixity. The bowdlerised edition has always been a failure; and this I take to mean not only the disinclination of the public to surround themselves with maimed things, but really the effective protest of a living book against being so disfigured.

XXXIII

RECENTLY I remember saying that the difference between one writer and another was largely a matter of the kind of words they used. Some have a larger vocabulary than others, and this enables them to use a variety of words which gives a suggestion of freshness. Others are distinguished by an instinct for beautiful words, but that connotes an artistic quality of mind which the average writer does not possess. A smaller class still delights in coining words, but the effect of such attempts on minds like my own is to induce a feeling of resentment. It is only rarely that a new word is added to the English language, and the history of such words would be a most interesting study. Generally speaking, it would, I think, be found that they were accidental, the outcome of an action, or incident, or personality, and very rarely the invention of a scholar or literary stylist.

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The majority of people are not conscious of a limited vocabulary, because they are strictly limited in their interests and emotions. The difference between ordinary people and what we call "interesting people" is largely a question of their interests—mental especially—and the power of expressing them. It was said of a well-known man—I forget whom—that if you had spoken two minutes to him as a stranger in the street, you would have known him to be a remarkable man without knowing who he was. The speaking eye would not alone have done this. It required the expression of the spirit which looked through the eye, and that meant the use of words straight from an individual mind out of which no counters came. And the difference between counters and coins, even in a material currency, is a difference between life and death. You can feel the difference as well as discover it with the eye.

There are writers and speakers who deal largely in counters as their medium of expression, and when they get beyond these, they use battered coins out of which all the sparkle has gone, all the distinguishing edges have been worn off. These are the "party men" of politics, the professional preachers, the average journalist. How

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easy it is to pick them out in their spoken or written word ; and how utterly they fail to move, much less to inspire, the people to whom their words are addressed. The secret is, of course, that they are not moved themselves. When a man is trying to express something about which he is deeply moved, every word he uses takes on the brilliancy and persuasion of a new coin. So we come to discover, that the use of battered words and counters in speech or writing, which makes so much of human intercourse uninspiring, is the absence in so many leaders of strong convictions.

But, given the convictions, a constant watchfulness is necessary on the part of speakers and writers if they would avoid *clichés*. The best of writers and the most inspired of orators will occasionally use a hackneyed phrase, or a word which has been used in a peculiar sense by other men. Stevenson knew this tendency, and his whole life was spent in purging his vocabulary of the battered word or phrase. The counter, I think, he could not have used, any more than a bank clerk could pass a base coin. There are others who, without such sedulous watchfulness, gradually get to a knowledge of differences which becomes a kind of instinct, so that it is next to

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impossible for a *cliché* to slip into their speech or writing. They are generally people who could exclaim with Lacordaire, "By the grace of God, I abhor a commonplace."

And there is another class, of writers chiefly, who seem never to think about avoiding or including certain words, but whose style is always individual, luminous, and effective. The most shining example of this class is probably G. K. Chesterton. You think nothing of Chesterton's style as you read him; but you are conscious of being in a series of illuminations. I take it this is a sign of extraordinary fecund imagination. Chesterton's ideas, no doubt, have their period of gestation, but they come without labour, and such births have always the right words waiting for them. Probably this kind of instinctive style, which attends the writer who is chiefly concerned with ideas, is the more arresting and illuminating; but it is likely at least that it will be more ephemeral than the style which is the deliberate artistic clothing of an idea by a writer bent on making literature.

The lesson for writers is that every *cliché* of speech is not only bad style in writing, but takes from the individuality of the writer and the effect of his work. To give specimens of

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the phrases in common use, and battered words which years ago have been done to death, would not be to my liking, who have no fancy for mortuaries. But let me take one from books and the other from pulpit rhetoric. When one man first said, "It leaves me cold," he made a suggestive phrase ; but if you use it to-day, you must not expect it to strike a reader with warm surprise. Again, perhaps, "Down the ages"—that hoary phrase of rhetoric was really an inspired poetical figure in the mouth of the first pulpit orator who uttered it ; but if a modern minister uses it, he must not mistake the light that comes into a hearer's eye as a light of surprise at his eloquence.

And last, the use of the stereotyped phrase, not seldom robs a book of all interest which has yet sincerity and an idea behind it. Indeed, these paragraphs are really the outcome of a bored reading of a manuscript which I had promised to read a few days ago, and which I gave up before I was half-way through. The subject was of vital importance, the author was manifestly sincere, and the writing was far from illiterate. Yet a hardened reader, to whom every MS. is still an adventure, and who does not lightly call anything "common," found himself unable to

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go through it. When after two hours I gave up and asked what was wrong, I found that there was hardly any locution with the stamp of the author's individuality. Yet grammatically it was without flaw.

XXXIV

WHAT is the reason for the deterioration in style that is said to take place when authors give up writing and take to dictating? That is a question that has often been put to me. Another question is, Why does oratory so seldom reach the level and secure the permanence of literature? The two questions are closely related, I think, and if we can answer the first we shall have revealed the reason why so much splendid oratory passes with the occasion, and, at last, with the orator.

Style *does* deteriorate with the habit of dictation, inevitably. It loses in crispness, in conciseness and in precision. True, in some forms of literature this is not all loss. The style in becoming colloquial loses its distinctively literary quality, but it may easily become more human, and thus make an appeal to readers whom literary style leaves unmoved. There is a certain form of

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the essay, for example, which gets its chief effects from the personality of the writer. Let that be a human friendly personality, some degree of slackness in the style will be, to a large number of readers, an added attraction, because it suggests unconsidered talking rather than carefully prepared and corrected writing. When a man is dictating he is talking aloud, and in talk there are few people who are as precise as when they are writing. Those who are, are not notable as charming conversationalists.

The worst form of dictated matter is the preaching style. To dictate with one person in view is all very well, as has been shown. To dictate with an audience before one, is almost invariably to preach; and "holding forth" is as far removed from literature as it is possible to be. The man dictating in this mood is under the domination of words rather than ideas, and words alone, no matter how wonderfully collocated never yet made literature. Further, in the flow of words that comes when speaking to an audience, there is a certain loss of sincerity—not intentional but almost inevitable if the full value of the spoken word is to be obtained. Yet one would not have the natural orator, or preacher, confine himself to a written discourse, for if he did, no

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little of his power would be gone. The "essay" form of sermon or address is usually a lifeless affair for the audience.

In writing of the best sort, words do not rule, but are the servants of, the writer. In the orator's passionate speech it is true there is a kind of instinctive selection from the crowds of words that press forward to his aid. But the selection has no deliberation, and with an embarrassment of riches, the speaker piles word upon word and phrase upon phrase, knowing the cumulative effect of such speech, and concerned rather with that than with the appeal of reasoned argument. And, as a rule, the more intoxicating the effect of oratory upon an audience, the more vapid it will be found in substance. A man with a natural gift of oratory would need to be an exceptionally honest man, and be guided by a very definite philosophy, if he would not be in his impassioned moments something of a charlatan. Every man who has had even an occasional gift of speech, and the opportunity to use it, knows the truth of this, and will remember the humiliation that has swept over him when he thought over certain excesses of speech of which he had been guilty in the crowded meeting, and the intoxication of applause. That alone would show that in all

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speech the snares are waste and insincerity. As the soul of literature is sincerity and restraint, the reasons why the spoken word is so seldom literature are now evident.

Any man may test this by cutting down a dictated article or spoken sermon. In dictating or in preaching he may have imagined he was indulging in no rhetoric, that he was, in fact, only putting sufficient clothing round his ideas to make them attractive. But when an editor says the article *must* be cut down, he will be astonished how easily he can cut away whole blocks. As a rule, the Introduction can be cut out entirely—a very revealing fact—and even his most pregnant passages will be found to have a superabundance of clothes which can be cut off. Grant that he send the article, the sermon, to the printer with regrets for what he has been compelled to sacrifice ; when his proofs come to him he will generally find that his “ stuff ” has not lost but actually gained by the rough pruning. It has, in fact, got one step nearer to literature in the process. It is possible to conceive of another kind of man who would see no improvement, whose work would, in fact, be spoilt in such a process, and in that case it would prove that the article or sermon was mere rhetoric—speech without ideas.

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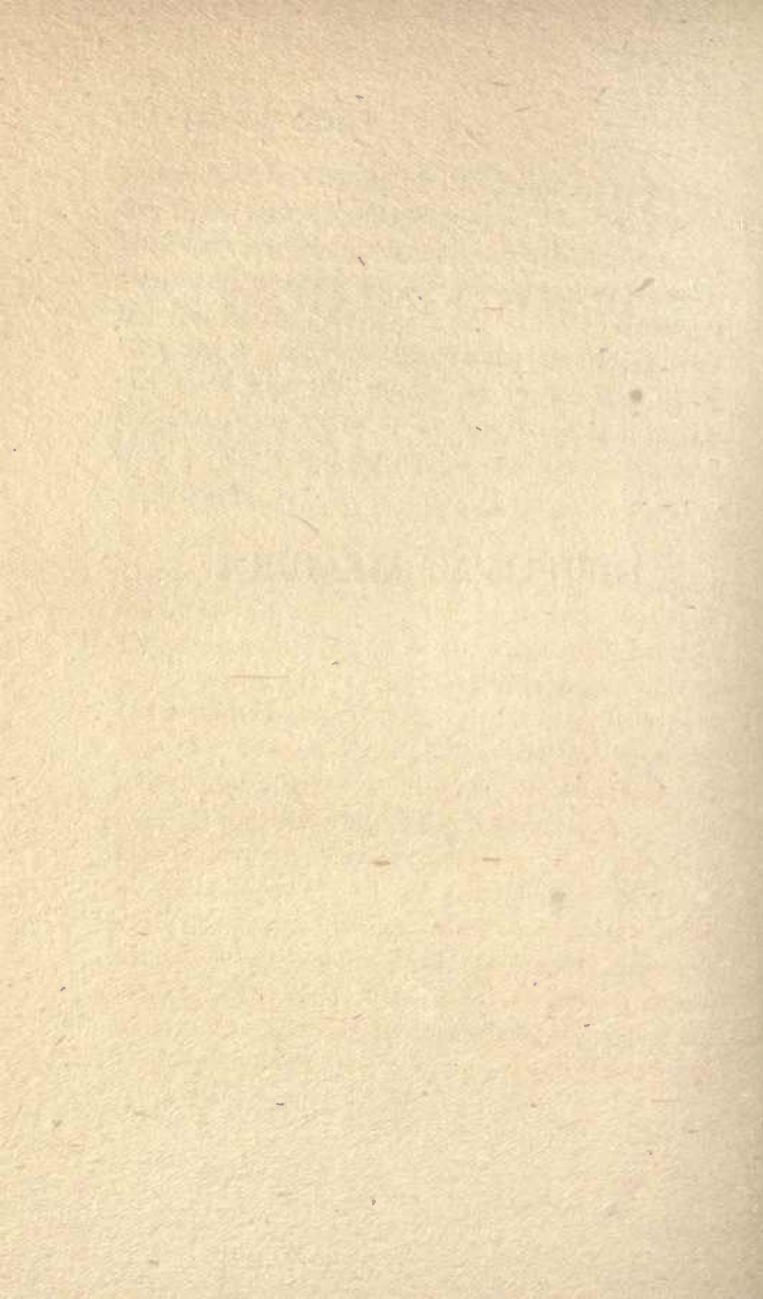
It is a striking difference between the war speeches of Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George, that one is all *rhetor*, inspired by the new emotion of the day's events ; the other invokes speech for the expression of great fundamental principles, and a view of life which do not change with varying fortunes of men or of nations. That is why the speeches of Mr. Asquith have an impressive dignity that the Prime Minister's most impassioned utterances lack. Mr. George's speeches have the sincerity of the moment's vision and purpose that belongs to the best forms of rhetoric ; but they have the inevitable waste resulting from such shifting views and new purposes. The finest of Mr. Asquith's speeches are indeed literature, and will live in the history of the war. Probably Mr. Asquith writes his speeches. I do not know. But it is certain that great ideas and principles guiding a man's daily life, gradually involve a purging of unworthy tricks of speech, which is equivalent to the restraint of the writer with an honest regard for the sincerity of literature.

The snare of dictation, then, is the snare of the orator—to pile up useless words. To write with one's own hand makes this next to impossible. For one thing, you want to get on with your

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theme, and in writing you find that mere words, like the Scotsman's claret, get you "no forrarder." And for another, when you are writing you are constantly revising the last paragraph and detecting the slack locutions and "pretty writing" that are so ready to ensnare the veteran on the one hand and the young writer on the other. Dictating may make an author live longer in the body; but it will lessen his chances of literary immortality.

DISJECTA MEMBRA



DISJECTA MEMBRA

IN a book recently published by the Century Company, *Little Essays in Literature and Life*, the author tells a delightfully characteristic story of Andrew Lang. "When I asked Andrew Lang, in London, what he thought of Arnold Bennett, he replied in apparent seriousness, looking the while, after his wont, obliquely down on the floor, 'I never heard of him.' " The author, Mr. Richard Burton, whom I have hitherto known only as a poet, comments: "The answer was whimsical, a sort of protest against the intricate matter-of-factness of Bennett's method. It was also the speaker's way of donning a protective armour against an undesirable subject."

Probably Mr. Burton is correct, yet who knows if Lang was not speaking the literal truth? I have never known a man who could be so entirely ignorant of subjects and persons in which, in whom, he was not interested. Bear in mind that, next to scholarship and his special subjects in literature, Lang's life passion was fishing, and that

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he spent many weeks of every year fishing in remote Highland lochs, and his professed ignorance of so modern a product as Mr. Bennett became not only credible but almost likely.

For me it is very interesting to learn that the late Keir Hardie was "a genuine book lover," and that his large correspondence includes many letters from William Morris and John Burroughs. This reveals a side of Keir Hardie's life of which probably the majority of the people who hated him so bitterly knew nothing. It accounts for the quite unaccountable interest I felt in the man, who, judged by his speeches, seemed a mischievous public influence. Now it turns out that he was a friend of John Burroughs! William Morris, as a Socialist, he was of course bound to know, and not necessarily as the author of "The Earthly Paradise." But Burroughs—that gives at least the writer the feeling that Keir Hardie must have been an interesting man to know.

I am reminded of a surprise that came to me one day years ago when I discovered a man whom I knew only as a London clerk, in his inner life a passionate admirer of John Burroughs. Strictly he was not an intellectual man, and he had small

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opportunities for the nature studies by which Burroughs has made his fame. But into the soul-destroying routine of his dull life there had come one of Burroughs' little books, in which a quiet voice speaks as if it spoke to only one reader, and instantly Burroughs existed for my clerk friend alone. So far as I am aware, it was his one touch with literature, but the literature was of the best, and it kept him spiritually alive.

Lately I have been reading the *Life of Walter Bagehot*, by his sister-in-law, Mrs. Barrington. Bagehot is one of the comparatively rare cases which literature presents of a man whose popularity has grown steadily after his death. He was well known among a fairly large circle when he died, and he had a position of influence which would have eventually become among the highest in the land. But he died when he was just over fifty, and before he had fully emerged into the full public appreciation which was his due. In many similar instances the influence is decreased by death, but in a few rare cases the disciples grow when they have no longer the master to gather round, but only his message to spread. So it has been with Bagehot, and to-day, thirty odd years after his death, his place and

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influence are higher than they have been at any time. It is the more remarkable in that till now there has been no biography, but only a very restrained prefatory "note" to his collected literary essays by his friend, R. H. Hutton.

Now comes this biography by a lady who is, more or less, contemporary, and the revelation of a wholly beautiful character, as son, as friend, as correspondent, as husband. As the only volume that has given the secret of Bagehot's personal enduring influence, the book has a value very clearly marked. But it is marked by something else which is not so easy to discover—by a charm that is delightful, but more elusive and not quite a part of Bagehot's personality, pleasant as that was. Puzzling over this, you suddenly come across a page here and there which is not strictly about the subject, and yet intensely fascinating, and you realize that it is here the fragrance comes from. The biographer, expressing her own reflections in the most unobtrusive way, so unobtrusively in fact, and so unselfconsciously, that not once after the introduction is the reader ever conscious of her personality. To come upon these pages by themselves, and paragraphs of the same order sandwiched—a hateful figure—among pure Bagehot is as if one discovered a clump of violets

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in a beautiful green bank. Here is the secret of the fragrance of the whole stretch. This I take to be a fine tribute to the biographer's personality.

Another reflection has come to me in reading this book. Mrs. Barrington says Bagehot and his three friends at University College in the 'fifties—Roscoe, Smith-Osler, R. H. Hutton—were united not only in purely intellectual sympathies and aims, but also in what she calls "A sense of the reality of the spiritual life." She says, indeed, this sense "was always present in their lives." Isn't this rather old fashioned in these days? Are there young men at University College to-day, or at Edinburgh University, or Glasgow or Aberdeen, not to speak of Oxford or Cambridge, who are united by "a sense of the reality of the spiritual life?" Remember the class of men to which Bagehot belonged. There was no pietism, but much healthy enjoyment in the shape of hunting, shooting and the like. Yet this "sense of the reality of the spiritual life" was the most real thing among them.

I came across a curious passage a few days ago in re-reading *Amiel's Journal*, after an interval of many years. Amiel lived the most of his life in Geneva as a professor, but he spent a number

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of years as a young man in Berlin, and knew the German mind, character and tendency. This is what he wrote in 1871, just after the Franco-Prussian War: "Without intending it, nations educate each other, while having apparently nothing in view but their own selfish interests. . . . It is Germany who will regenerate contemporary France by the effort to crush her . . . I hope sincerely that this war will issue in a new balance of things better than any which has gone before. A new Europe, in which the government by the individual by himself will be the cardinal principle of society, in opposition to the Latin principle, which regards the individual as a thing, a means to an end." Later he says: "The notion of 'bad taste' seems to have no place in German æsthetics. Their elegance has no grace. . . . Their imagination lacks style, training, education, and knowledge of the world; it has an ill-bred air even in its Sunday dress. The race is poetical and intelligent, but common and ill-mannered. Pliancy and gentleness, manners, wit, vivacity, taste, dignity and charm are qualities which belong to others. . . . They may have humanity of feeling, but the delicacies the little perfections of life, are unknown to them."

Amiel, himself "Germanized" to a degree

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distasteful to his friends, wrote these words forty-three years ago. The war has shown beyond contradiction that in the period since then all the German defects have grown with her development as an Empire. She is farther from the grace of culture than she was at the beginning of her wonderful imperial career.

Since the War began I can truly say that there is no form of German savagery for which I have not been prepared. That is because I have not forgotten what I have read and known of Germany in the last twenty years. I have always detected a lurking strain of brutality in the German character. Add to that, insolence of power, and anything is possible.

The artist cannot make popular subjects. He may chance upon one and please the crowd, as well as the artistic critic, but he cannot choose his interpretation of his subject. That is his art, his inner light, by which he must be guided, whether it leads to public approval or censure. Rodin's life is a very remarkable study of a great artist's career from this standpoint. Rodin as a sculptor and Conrad as a novelist, have won to the calm of a supreme place in their respective

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art. I think this must be comforting. True, I remember Arnold said :

“Calm’s not life’s crown, though calm is well,
’Tis all perhaps that man acquires,
But ’tis not what his youth desires.”

But after a life of stress calm *is* desirable, and it is also good. It is likely to conserve if it does not stimulate the power without which creative imagination dies, or is blurred.

Probably there has been more romance in the efforts of journalistic adventures that have come to nothing, than in the smaller number that have won a place. This may seem a hard saying, but it is true. In the early days of every journal, ideals are uppermost ; it is an adventure of high courage and of brave hopes, to which come many eager souls, more anxious to express views that may help a cause, than careful to inquire about such sordid matters as money. It is a time of dreams of success, and in success money is the reward that will bring many comfortable things. Yet in the few cases in which journalistic adventures become established commercial successes, it is unquestionably true that practical matters must eventually at least take precedence of the purely

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idealistic. So romance all but vanishes with prosperity, in newspapers as in other enterprises. But new papers are always starting, and therefore Fleet Street is a perennial street of romance.

The old idea that uneducated men, provided they are strong, make the best soldiers, will pass for ever with this war.

Nowadays every new book of verse, even by unknown writers, has the dignity of respectful notice at least. Reviewers have come to realize that the War will bring forth the new poet.

Every man after the early twenties, if he has learned anything at all, gets to know that few books are so utterly bad as to merit the "slating" that the youthful critic loves to indulge in. Conversely, of course, he learns that it is simply impossible that in any decade or generation a new classic can be born every week, and that few books can be worthy of whole-hearted enthusiastic praise. By this time he has learned also that the true function of literary criticism is to discover excellences ; and so, while disappointments have tempered his enthusiasms, he has become more keenly appreciative of the excel-

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lences that are to be discovered occasionally in commonplace books.

This leads one to the conclusion that the criticism of middle-age is generally not only more kindly than that of youth, but that it is really sounder. I think it is, but am not so destitute of humour that I am unprepared for the smile which will come into the face of youth which reads this solemn remark. On the contrary it is sufficiently amusing for me to reflect that when "a few more years" shall have rolled, the youthful smiler shall be in the same position as the grey-haired man who is writing these lines. One writes "amusing," but it is not cynical amusement one feels, as of one who believes that the end of life is to discover that there is no progress and nothing essentially different in the world, or at least of importance enough to be worth striving for. No, my smile is not that which was found "on the face of the tiger"; it comes from the reflection that by means of the mellowing years the world on the whole will continue to be a very tolerable place, which, if filled with eternal hot-headed, arrogant youth, would be rather terrible.

What quality is necessary to make a novel "go"

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no one can say, but one thing is known definitely—charm alone is not sufficient. You may have delightful characters, with whom it is a pleasure to associate, the style may be beautiful, the personality of the writer most winning—all these things make charm—but without some driving force, or dramatic quality in the *story*, a novel is bound to be a failure in the popular sense. Notwithstanding, my counsel is, Get such books at every opportunity. Every one you get will mean a new friend. Don't be frightened at the prospect. Your friends will still be a limited circle.

There is always autobiography in fiction, but in conversation with a friend we both agreed there was an unusual amount of it just now, in novels that have achieved some success. This accounts for the extraordinary reality of some recent books, which had success and yet have missed great popularity. Avowed autobiography is probably the least dependable kind of literature. But in a novel the real man or woman can reveal even to nakedness, without fear of discovery and shame. And it would be easy, by adducing evidence, to argue that the great novels of the world, the only stories that have real immor-

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talities, are largely composed of autobiographical elements.

Here it is *à propos* to refer to Mark Rutherford as a case that helps my view ; I refer to it also because it gives an opportunity of offering a revised opinion of this author and his probable place in literature. Lately, from Saturday to Monday, I have found myself in surroundings where the variety of books at my disposal is more restricted than I have been accustomed to, and less easy of access. But Mark Rutherford's books are there, and almost every other Sunday I find myself falling back on them. As stories I know them familiarly, and so they have no surprises. But they have always the freshness of actual life. The people are real ; they are in the right surroundings ; and the incidents are just such as we know happen in the majority of obscure lives. So I begin to think that spite of the greyness, amounting to depression, of Mark Rutherford, and the quiet monotony of his style, he may find a classic place in English literature. I do not yet love Mark Rutherford, and he is not a cheerful companion. But his books are exercising a growing fascination over me, and every time I take up one I cannot lay it down till I have finished it, no matter how often I have read it.

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It seems to me that, among modern novels, those by Mark Rutherford stand almost alone, by the extent to which they are composed of autobiographical and actual experience.

It is my opinion that the best literature of the War will eventually come out of the first three months, that marvellous time of exultation and depression, of dejection and confidence, of ignorant "knowledge," and newspaper deceptions, that time when every casualty went to our hearts as a personal loss, and every set-back was a fatal blow at our supremacy. I know not if these things were felt, or could be felt so intensely, outside of London, but they made an atmosphere here, from August to November, in which literature is born, if it does not at once become articulate.

There has been a lively newspaper discussion on the subject of war and its influence on literature, between those who think that war brings about a new birth in literature and those who think that it stifles or blunts the finer susceptibilities that are essential for literature. But surely everything depends upon the kind of war and its magnitude. I am not aware that the Boer War gave birth to anything approaching to literature.

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It is, however, undeniable that the Napoleonic struggle a hundred years ago made a new beginning in literature, which resulted in the splendid Victorian age of literary production. Take the Crimean War and the Boer War; contrast them in their aims, and their importance for ourselves and the world, with the Great War of to-day. It is obvious that one could not expect a literary new birth from the two former wars; and that we may expect the latter to have as far reaching an effect as the Napoleonic struggle. The present war is the biggest struggle for freedom the world has ever seen. Other kinds of war breed histories; wars of freedom, successful or unsuccessful, make literature—always.

The word “always” is used deliberately, because it is my firm belief that there cannot be literature entirely destitute of emotion, and when emotion has reached a certain height, literature—song, story, or history—is the inevitable outcome. The nobler the emotion, the finer the literature. Obviously, since the effect of great emotion is to make for the self-forgetfulness in which all literature is born.

This view is violently opposed by the school that stands for intellectualism and deliberate “art” as the chief factors in literature. To

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me, however, intellect divorced from emotion is a poor thing. It may—often does—draw out my admiration by its cleverness, its cold perfection. But it has not that illimitable quality in which I lose self-consciousness and become at one with the author. To me it seems that unless a book can bring about this result in some reader, it has not the final essential of literature.

Fear is the natural and instinctive feeling of the most finely-tempered souls in face of imminent peril; but with them it is only the preliminary to a stage of spiritual exaltation. The fear is when they see only material force. The next stage is when they see “the chariots and the horses” of Elisha’s servant’s vision. After that it is easy to understand the recklessness of danger which is the result.

I confess I have a profound respect for the true mystic. The man who is a mystic through and through may be very trying, but always when he comes in my way there is, despite the clear knowledge I have that his view of life is impossible, a lurking wish that I could “be at one with him in all his modes of thinking and believing.” On the other hand the *practical* mystic is somehow

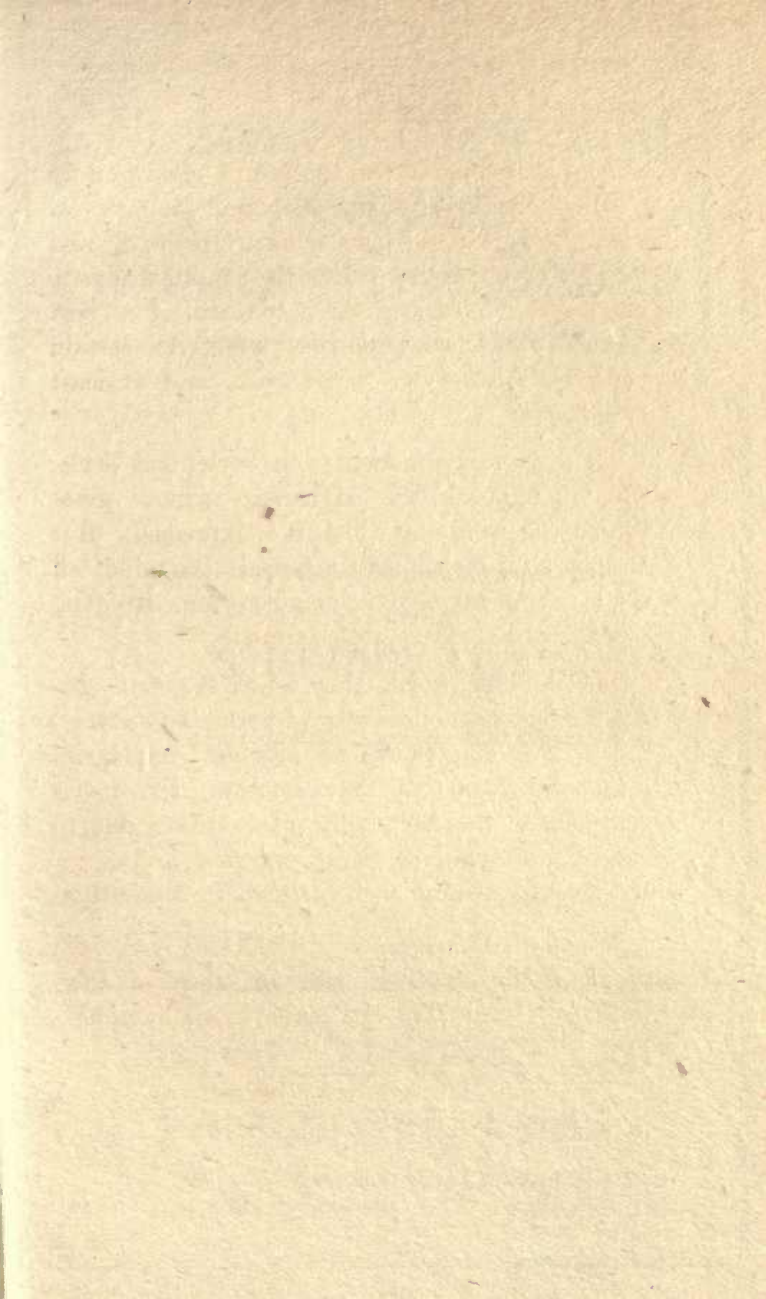
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always wounding me unexpectedly. The worldly view I know and can cope with, and the mystical view I understand and sympathize with, and humbly try to follow. But the practical mystic makes me a man without a country, or at best a man with two countries, which to certain natures is an even worse case, and at least undesirable.

There is no permanency in style *quâ* style. The thought is the dynamic which gives life to the words by which it is expressed. But as soon as a fine thought is born in the mind, all the beautiful words in the language come trooping to express it. Thus style is made.

The kind of words they use is the main distinction between one writer of parts and another. The average man cannot tell *why* one book should look more attractive than another, but he is conscious of it. Something of course is due to the kind of type, size of page, format and so on, but most to the kind of words used by the author.

Nobody nowadays says, "I told you so," or confronts another with evidence of false prophecy. The War has made us all humbler.



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